

TOOLBOX SAFETY MEETING

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Risk Control

Strains and Sprains

There may be times when you accidentally overexert yourself and suffer a strain or sprain at work. It's important for you to recognize your injury and know how to treat it.

Sprain – Ligament Injury

You're working and you fall off a ladder. You feel a wrenching pain in your back, but you can get up on your own and continue working. The real pain comes later. This is a sprain.

In a sprain, a joint is forced to go beyond its normal range of motion. The ligament fibers overstretch and tear. This often happens with sudden twisting in active sports. The joint can still function, but ligament tears leak blood into the tissue surrounding the joint, causing swelling and discomfort.

Strain – Muscle or Tendon Injury

If a muscle or tendon was injured when you fell off the ladder you have strain. Strains are not as serious as sprains. They often happen when you neglect to warm up your muscles before using them or when you've overworked weak back muscles. Years of tension or misuse can cause chronically strained muscles or tendons. These injuries can cause pain and swelling. You can have both injuries at the same time.

How to Treat Your Injury

Just remember **R.I.C.E.** when you have a strain or sprain.

R = Rest: Avoid putting weight on the injured joint for 24 to 48 hours. Support a sprained wrist, elbow or shoulder with a sling. Tape a sprained finger or toe to a healthy one.

I = Ice: Immediately apply ice or cold packs to the injured area to reduce swelling. Place a cloth between your skin and the ice or cold pack. Use for 10 minutes every hour.

C = Compression: Wrap the injury with a flexible cloth bandage or compression sleeve to further reduce swelling.

E = Elevation: Try to keep the injured area raised above your heart.

More Tips

- Relieve pain and inflammation with aspirin or ibuprofen.
- When pain and swelling have subsided, begin gently moving and stretching the injured joint and gradually phase in strengthening exercises.
- Report all injuries to your supervisor.

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Signs It May Be More Than a Strain or Sprain

- Intense pain and swelling (indicating a possible fracture).
- A cold, blue or numb area beyond the injury.
- A misshapen or very unstable joint that won't support your weight or wobbles from side to side.
- Severe pain after two days of home treatment.
- No improvement after four days.

Prevention

- Treat your muscles with the care and respect they deserve.
- Keep them flexible with daily slow stretching.
- Warm your muscles and joints before exercise.
- Stretch out your muscles when you're through exercising.

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