



**AUSTIN  
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## **SPRAINS and STRAINS**

### **What are Sprains?**

Sprains are torn or stretched ligaments. Ligaments connect bones together at joints. They are tough bands of fibrous tissue that connect two bones together in your joints. Symptoms will include swelling, pain on movement, bruising and inability to move the joint. You may feel a pop or tear when the sprain occurs.

The areas of your body that are most vulnerable to sprains are your ankles, knees, and wrists. A sprained ankle can occur when your foot turns inward, placing extreme tension on the ligaments of your outer ankle. A sprained knee can be the result of a sudden twist, and a wrist sprain can occur when falling on an outstretched hand.

### **Sprains are classified by severity:**

Grade 1 sprain (mild): Slight stretching and some damage to the fibers of the ligament.

Grade 2 sprain (moderate): Partial tearing of the ligament. There is abnormal looseness (laxity) in the joint when it is moved in certain ways.

Grade 3 sprain (severe): Complete tear of the ligament. This causes significant instability and makes the joint nonfunctional.

### **What are Strains?**

Strains are stretched or torn muscles or tendons. Tendons connect muscle to bone. Sudden twisting or pulling can cause strains. Strains can happen suddenly or develop over time. Back and hamstring muscle strains are common. Many people get strains playing sports. Symptoms include pain, muscle spasms, swelling, and trouble moving the muscle.

Soccer, football, and other contact sports put athletes at risk for strains, as do sports that feature quick starts, such as hurdling, jumping, and running races. Gymnastics, tennis, rowing, golf and other sports that require extensive gripping, have a high incidence of hand sprains. Elbow strains frequently occur in racquet, throwing, and contact sports.

### **Treatment**

Treatment of both sprains and strains usually involves resting the injured area, icing it, wearing a bandage or device that compresses the area, elevating the area (**R.I.C.E.**) and medicines such as Motrin, Ibuprofen or Tylenol. Later treatment might include exercise and physical therapy. More severe strains or sprains may require surgery.

### **When should I call or see the doctor?**

1. If you are unable to put weight on your ankle or knee.
2. If there is a deformity of a joint or it looks crooked.
3. If a joint feels unstable.
4. If your pain is very severe.
5. If you are unsure how serious your injury is.