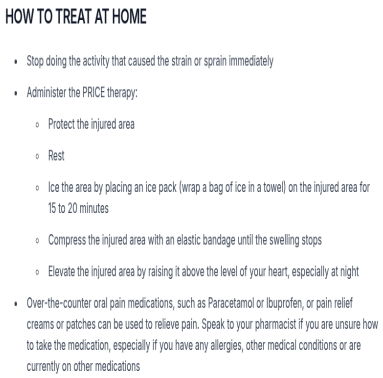


HOW TO TREAT AT HOME

- Stop doing the activity that caused the strain or sprain immediately
- Administer the PRICE therapy:
  - Protect the injured area
  - Rest
  - Ice the area by placing an ice pack (wrap a bag of ice in a towel) on the injured area for 15 to 20 minutes
  - Compress the injured area with an elastic bandage until the swelling stops
  - Elevate the injured area by raising it above the level of your heart, especially at night
- Over-the-counter oral pain medications, such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen, or pain relief creams or patches can be used to relieve pain. Speak to your pharmacist if you are unsure how to take the medication, especially if you have any allergies, other medical conditions or are currently on other medications

Sprains and strains from sport: MOHâ??s PRICE steps and the six signs that mean seeing a GP

Description

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Most sprains and strains from sport can be treated at home, and the Ministry of Healthâ??s advice is to stop the activity straight away and start PRICE: protect, rest, ice, compress and raise the injured limb. MOH also sets out six signs that mean a trip to a GP.



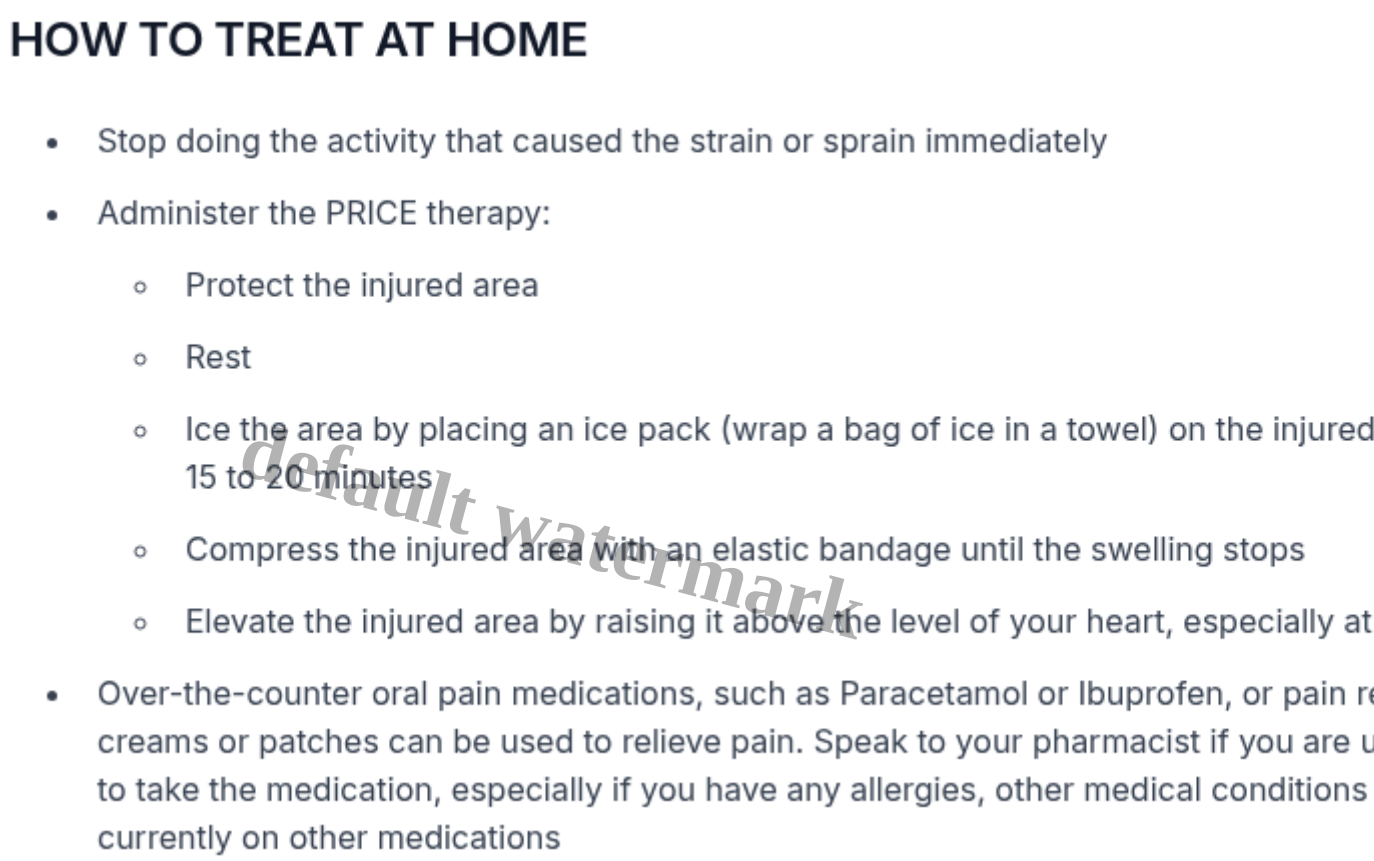
The Strains and Sprains page, last updated 2 January 2025. Screenshot: Ministry of Health

The two injuries are easy to mix up. A strain is an injury to a muscle or tendon, and is most common in the legs and back. A sprain is an injury to a ligament, the tissue around a joint that connects bones, and usually happens at the knee, ankle or wrist. Both bring pain, swelling, bruising, soreness and restricted movement.

PRICE, step by step

- Protect the injured area from further harm.
- Rest it.

- Ice it for 15 to 20 minutes, with an ice pack or a bag of ice wrapped in a towel.
- Compress it with an elastic bandage until the swelling stops.
- Raise it above the level of the heart, especially at night.



MOH home treatment steps for strains and sprains, page last updated 2 January 2025. Screenshot: Ministry of Health

For pain, MOH points to over-the-counter paracetamol or ibuprofen, or pain relief creams and patches. Ask a pharmacist first if you have allergies, other medical conditions or take other medicines. MOH also says a pharmacist can advise whether you need to see a GP or go to the emergency department.

Ice is for the fresh injury. HealthHubâ??s ankle pain guide, written with NUH, recommends ice packs for acute injuries to keep swelling down, and keeps heat pads for chronic conditions, where warmth relaxes the tissue and brings blood flow.

Six signs that mean seeing a GP

See a GP if any of these apply:

- the pain or swelling is severe
- the limb feels numb or cold
- the limb looks crooked or has unusual lumps
- you cannot move the joint

- you cannot put weight on it
- there is no improvement after three days of home treatment

The NUH ankle guide lists more reasons to see a doctor for ankle pain: not being able to walk comfortably, deformity around the joint, pain at night or at rest, swelling that spreads up to the calf, being unable to bend the ankle, pain that lasts beyond a few days, and signs of infection such as fever, redness or warmth.

Getting back to training

The same NUH guide lists physiotherapy among the treatments that help people return to their usual level of activity after an ankle injury.

For prevention, HealthHubâ??s Injury-proof Your Moves advice is plain: warm up before exercise, cool down and stretch afterwards, get the form right with body weight before adding dumbbells, and stop if something hurts.

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