

Mind your Step!

Sprains and strains

Sprains and strains are common injuries when people trip or slip (though injuries can be far worse if they knock their head when they fall). A sprain is damage to a ligament (the tissue that holds bones together - e.g. in the wrist, ankle or knee). A strain is damage to a muscle or tendon (that binds muscles to bones). Both are painful, causing swelling and bruising, and occur when a part of the body has been pulled or stretched too far.

Examples of risks:

Clutter left on the floor; uneven rugs, carpets, paths or flooring; trailing cables; unsuitable footwear; poor visibility; wet floors; spilt drinks; ponds; pools

Key safety messages for the home and workplace:

- Make sure you can clearly see where you're walking.
- Make sure that rooms (and particularly dangerous areas like stairs) are well lit. Turn the light on if you're moving around at night.
- Mop up spillages or wet floors straight away and warn people if they're still wet.
- Make sure floor and outside surfaces are kept smooth and free from obstacles and clutter.
- Keep baths and showers clean of soap and use a non-stick bathmat if needed.
- Keep cables coiled neatly and not dangling or stretched out across the floor.
- Be extra careful of slips near water – it's possible to lose consciousness and drown even in shallow water.



Basic First Aid

- Follow the 'R.I.C.E.' procedure:
 - **Rest** – try not to move the injured area; allow it time to heal.
 - **Ice** – apply an ice pack or even pack of frozen vegetables for 15 to 20 minutes to take the swelling down (then remove for 20 minutes and repeat if needed).
 - **Compression** – wrap the area firmly (but not too tightly) in a bandage.
 - **Elevation** – try to raise the area above heart level.
- Get medical advice – some severe sprains and strains require surgery.

More information about first aid can be found at the St. John Ambulance website: www.sja.org.uk