

### 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](http://www.sja.org.uk)