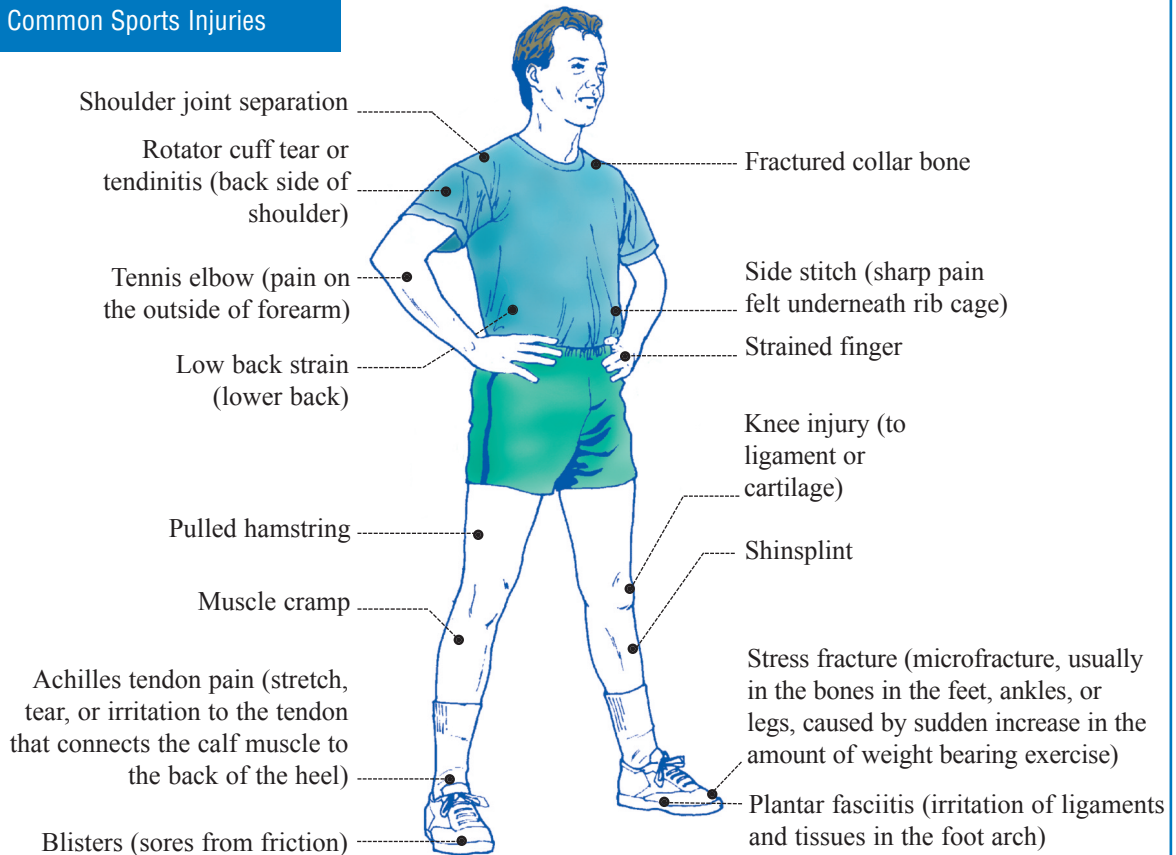




## Sprains, Strains & Sports Injuries

### Common Sports Injuries



## Signs & Symptoms

### For Sprains

A sprain happens when you overstretch or tear a ligament. (This is fibrous tissue that connects bones.) A joint is affected, but there is no dislocation or fracture. Symptoms are rapid pain, swelling, bruising, and a warm feeling at the injured site.

### For Strains

A strain is an injury to the muscles or tendons. (These are tissues that connect muscles to bones.) Symptoms are pain, tenderness, swelling, and bruising.



## Sprains, Strains & Sports Injuries, Continued

### For Sports Injuries

Sports injury symptoms depend on the injury. They include pain, tenderness, swelling, and bruising. Bones may be broken or dislocated. (See **Common Sports Injuries** on previous page.)

### Causes

Sprains occur from an accident, injury, fall, etc. A strain occurs when you overstretch or overexert a muscle or tendon (not a ligament). This is usually due to overuse and injuries, such as sports injuries.



*An ankle sprain can cause strain on the achilles tendon.*

### Questions to Ask

Do you suspect a head, neck, or spinal injury by any of these symptoms?

- Loss of consciousness.
- Paralysis. The head, neck, or back can't move.
- Inability to open and close the fingers or move the toes or any part of the arms and legs.
- Feelings of numbness in the legs, arms, shoulders, or any body part.
- It looks like the head, neck, or back is in an odd position.
- Neck pain is felt right away.



{**Note:** See **First Aid** section in **Head/ Neck/ Spine Injuries** at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).}

NO

*Flowchart continued in next column*

Are any of these signs present?

- A bone sticks out or bones in the injured part make a grating sound.
- An injured body part looks bent, shortened, or misshaped.
- You can't move the injured body part or put weight on it.
- The injured area is blue, pale, or feels cool, but the same limb on the other side of the body does not.

NO

Are any of these signs present?

- You can't bend or straighten an injured limb.
- Bad pain and swelling occur or the pain gets worse.
- Pain is felt when you press along the bone near the injury.

NO

Does the sprain or strain not improve after using self-care for 2 days?

NO



### Self-Care / First Aid

- If the injury is not serious, stop what you are doing and use **R.I.C.E.** (See at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).)
- If you sprained a finger or hand, remove rings. (If you don't and your fingers swell up, the rings may have to be cut off.)
- Take an over-the-counter medicine for pain, if needed. {**Note:** Many sports medicine providers do not recommend aspirin-like medicine at first, because it can make bleeding and bruising worse.}



{**Note:** See **First Aid** section in **Broken Bones/ Dislocations** at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).}





## Treatment

Treatment for sprains, strains, and sports injuries depends on the injury and on the extent of damage. Self-care may be all that is needed for mild injuries. Sports injuries and sprains may need medical treatment. Some sprains need a cast. Others may need surgery if the tissue affected is torn.

Broken bones (other than broken toes) need medical care right away.



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## Sprains, Strains & Sports Injuries, Continued

- Try liniments and balms. These give a cooling or warming sensation by masking the pain. They do not promote healing.
- Once the injury begins to heal, use M.S.A.:
  - **Movement.** Work toward a full range of motion as soon as possible. This will help maintain flexibility during healing and prevent any scar tissue from limiting future performance.
  - **Strength.** Gradually strengthen the injured area once the swelling is controlled and a range of motion is back.
  - **Alternative Activities.** Do regular exercises that do not strain the injured part. Start this a few days after the injury, even though the injured part is still healing.

## Prevention

### To Prevent Serious Injuries (especially during contact sports)

- Wear the right protective gear and clothing for the sport (e.g., a helmet; shoulder, knee, and wrist pads; a mouth guard, etc.).
- Train in the sport so you learn how to avoid injury. “Weekend athletes” are prone to injury. Follow the rules that apply to the sport.

### General Prevention

- Ease into any exercise program. Build up gradually.
- Avoid running on hard surfaces like asphalt and concrete. Run on flat surfaces. Running uphill puts added stress on the achilles tendon.
- Don’t lock your knees. When you jump, land with your knees bent.
- Wear shoes and socks that fit well. The widest area of your foot should match the widest area of the shoe. You should be able to wiggle your toes with the shoe on when you sit and when you stand. Wear shoes that provide shock absorption and stability.
- Stop if you feel pain. Don’t do the activity until you can do it without pain.
- Cool down after exercise. Do the activity at a slower pace for 5 minutes.



*Do warm-up exercises  
before the activity.*