

Sprains

What is a sprain?

When a joint is forced to move beyond its normal range or in an abnormal direction a sprain, or tear of ligaments, results. The extent may vary from a few torn fibers to a complete ligament tear. There may be pain, swelling and instability of the joint. Treatment depends on the severity of the injury and the specific ligaments affected.

How do you treat sprains?

When a sprain occurs, stop all strenuous use of the involved joint to prevent aggravation of the injury, increased damage, and delay of healing. Have the injury assessed by a health care provider. An X-ray may be needed to assure there is no fracture (see back). Early treatment will accelerate your healing. Just remember the letters of the **RICE** system and follow these steps:

R = Rest

I = Ice

C = Compression

E = Elevation

The RICE System

Rest. Initially, rest the joint. As the affected area begins to heal, gradually resume activity, but only if it doesn't cause significant discomfort. If you continue to feel severe pain, do not use the joint.

Ice. Put ice in a plastic bag and wrap it in a towel. Apply it to the injury as soon as possible. Keep it on the injury for 20 minutes and repeat this every 2 or 3 hours for the first 48 to 72 hours after injury. This will help reduce swelling and pain. *Ice applications longer than 20 minutes can cause damage to the skin.*

Compression. Compression using an elastic bandage over the injured joint may lessen swelling. It should be snug but not tight and should not interfere with circulation. If used on the foot, ankle, leg or knee, begin wrapping at the toes and wrap upwards. If used on a hand, arm or elbow, start at the fingertips and wrap upwards. Do not wear compression bandages while sleeping - you may not realize the bandage is too tight if you are asleep.

Elevate.

Elevate the injured part ideally above the level of the heart. This will improve circulation and lessen swelling and pain. When wrapping the injured area, first elevate it, then wrap it. Then apply ice. Whenever you can, elevate the injury. This will accelerate the healing process.

Sprains

Summary of Treatment

If you suspect a sprain, stop using the injured body part. Elevate the body part, apply compression with an elastic bandage and apply ice to the injured area. Rest the injury as much as possible, especially the first 2 to 3 days. However, if the pain is severe at the time of injury or is persistent over time, visit a health care provider as soon as possible.

When are you back to normal?

As pain and swelling improve, allowing more comfortable use of the joint, gradually resume normal activities. During this phase of recovery, exercise with caution to prevent re-injury.

What about re-injury?

Many students try to run, jump and participate in sports before the joint is capable of withstanding the stresses the activity demands – delaying complete healing or possibly resulting in a more severe re-injury. Rehabilitation of the joint, including range of motion and strengthening exercises should be discussed with your health care provider, so you can regain full use and enjoy activities without high risk of injury.

Do you return for a reassessment?

If you are not improving in a week (e.g. continued pain or significant limitation of use of the joint and bruising despite using the RICE system) return to your health care provider for reassessment.

X-Ray Services

What if you need an X-Ray?

The SHC X-ray Department provides routine radiography to students according to the orders of a health care provider. Only students who have paid the “*Health Services Fee*” are eligible. A physician outside SHC may also request X-rays for an eligible student. Any student needing a procedure not offered by this department will be referred to Montgomery Regional Hospital Diagnostic Imaging Department (at the student’s expense)

How much does an X-Ray cost?

The student is charged a fee for each X-ray procedure, which may include one or several images depending on the body part studied. The fee includes the imaging by a certified X-ray technologist and official diagnosis by a radiologist within 24 hours of a request. All procedures are billed through Accounts Receivable in 233 Burruss Hall as a “*Pharmacy Charge*” or “*Medical Clinic Charge*.”

X-rays are medical records.

X-ray images and the written report from the radiologist are official records and are required to be kept at SHC until 5 years after your graduation. Copies of x-rays for use by an outside physician can be made at a nominal fee per procedure with the approval of a SHC health care provider *and* your written permission. The x-ray Department will loan local physicians the original copy of the x-rays upon receipt of a properly completed *X-ray Loan and Waiver Form*, as long as the film has been previously interpreted by a SHC radiologist. The loan is limited to twenty-four hours unless otherwise noted.

Private Insurance Coverage

Some insurance companies will reimburse you for your X-rays and some will not. Upon request, you can receive an itemized statement of your X-ray charges from SHC which you may file for a reimbursement.

SHC is not responsible for filing or collecting fees from a private insurance carrier!