
What Are Soft Tissue Injuries?

Soft tissues injuries include injuries to muscles, tendons and ligaments (not bone).

Tendons are fibrous bands that hold muscles to bone.

Damage to muscles or tendons by overstretching is referred to as a 'strain'.

Ligaments are fibrous bands that hold bones together. Overstretching ligaments is referred to as a 'sprain'.

Sprains and strains can happen to people of all ages with varied results.

The first and normal response of soft tissue to an injury is inflammation. This involves bruising within the tissues (bleeding), swelling and pain.

If inflammation is allowed to continue, blood and swelling will be left in the injured area delaying the natural healing process and the return to full activities. There may also be reduced movement.

You may need to see your local doctor or health care professional if the injury does not improve within a week. Further tests or treatment may be required.

In severe injuries, there may also be a broken bone (fracture). An x-ray may be needed to check for this.

Full recovery usually takes between one and six weeks. The length of time depends upon your age, general health and the severity of the injury. Painkillers may be required. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

Getting Further Advice & Support

Please feel free to return to one of our Medical Treatment Centre's whilst the event is on-going if you have any concerns or questions.

Following the event, you should seek further advice (if needed) from your GP or local walk in centre, Minor injuries Unit (MIU) or hospital Emergency Department (ED). You can also get free non-emergency advice by calling NHS 111.

We are unable to give health or other advice over the phone.

In an Emergency call 999 for an Ambulance



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SOFT TISSUE INJURY (STI)

Patient Information Leaflet

This leaflet contains important information about the treatment you have received and what to do and what to expect next.

Please take the time to read it carefully, keep it safe and show it to anyone who asks about the treatment you have received or who helps to look after you.

FIRST 3 DAYS TREATMENT

In the first 3 days following injury, the following guidelines should be followed:

- P** - Protection
- R** - Rest
- I** - Ice
- C** - Compression
- E** - Elevation

Protection: It is necessary to protect the injured area from further injury. The amount of protection depends upon the extent of the injury and may involve the use of a sling or crutches.

Rest: Resting the injured area is necessary to prevent aggravating the injury. It does not mean stopping all activity. Moving a joint as pain allows will help prevent joint stiffness.

Ice: Ice reduces blood flow to the injured area and helps to limit swelling. It also reduces pain. Use a bag of frozen peas (in a damp towel) or a cold gel pack and place on the injured area. It is most effective if applied within 5-10 minutes of injury. Ice should be applied for 20 minutes every one to two hours and should be continued for at least three days after injury. Do not leave on for more than 30 minutes as this then encourages blood flow to the area.

Do not apply ice if you have circulation problems.

Do not apply ice if you cannot tell the difference between hot and cold.

Do not apply ice directly to the skin as this may cause an ice burn.

Compression: This helps to decrease the amount of swelling and bleeding. This can be applied using a stretch bandage that does not restrict circulation or cause additional pain.

Elevation: Elevating an injured limb will help to reduce swelling. If possible, raise the limb above the level of your heart. Support the limb with cushions or a sling to keep it raised when not walking or using it.

THINGS TO AVOID AFTER AN INJURY

- **Do not** continue to exercise the injured area.
- **Do not** soak in a hot bath or apply heat to the injured area as this will increase blood flow and, therefore, increase bleeding and swelling.
- **Do not** have the affected area massaged as this promotes blood flow and swelling. It may also damage newly forming muscle or ligament fibres.
- **Do not** stretch an injured muscle for the first 3 days as you will put too much strain on muscle fibres which are trying to heal.
- **Avoid** alcohol as it increases blood flow and swelling and can make you less aware of aggravating your injury.



AFTER 3 DAYS TREATMENT

After the first 3 days a regime of MICE is recommended.

- M** - Movement
- I** - Ice
- C** - Compression
- E** - Elevation

Movement: Gentle exercises and stretching should be done to minimise stiffness. Mild pain should be expected, however significant pain should be avoided. Slowly increase your activity levels as tolerated over the first few days. If you have a significant injury, you may need to avoid certain activities or movements until adequate healing has taken place. If you are unsure, ask your doctor or physiotherapist. A physiotherapist can provide you with exercises to improve muscle strength, joint flexibility and balance. These exercises will help you recover, limit pain and reduce the chance of the injury recurring.

Can I put weight through my injured limb?

If it is a leg injury, crutches may be issued by the medical centre for resting the injured leg and helping with pain. After the first 3 days, it is important to slowly start putting more weight through your leg unless otherwise instructed. Your physiotherapist will advise you on this.