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First Aid for Strains or Sprains

WHAT ARE SPRAINS OR STRAINS?

Ligaments and tendons surround the joints of the body. When a joint gets twisted beyond normal, the tendons and ligaments become stretched and may even tear slightly. The body responds to this injury by releasing chemicals in the area causing swelling. This can also occur when muscles are damaged.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT MY SPRAIN OR STRAIN?

RICE therapy is the first type of treatment that you can do. **RICE** stands for: **Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation.**

Rest: limit the use of your injured body part (i.e. limit walking)

Ice: should be applied initially (not heat!) to the injury. Ice should not be left on for longer than 20 minutes at a time and can be used several times a day.

Compression: Use an elastic or ACE wrap around the injury. Don't wrap it too tightly. This will help prevent too much swelling.

Elevation: Elevate the injury above your heart when possible. This will help prevent too much swelling.

IS IT BROKEN OR SHOULD I CALL THE HEALTH CENTER?

It is not always easy to tell if you have a broken bone or it is just a strain. Generally, if you have very limited motion of the joint or if there is significant swelling or bruising then it is a good idea to call the Health Center.