

Sprains, strains, and other soft tissue injuries are the most common type of workplace injury in Nova Scotia. There may be times when you accidentally overexert yourself and suffer a strain or sprain at work. It is important for you to recognize your injury and know how to treat it.

# Sprains and Strains

Date Discussed:

Signature:

**Sprain** – Ligament injury. For example, you are working, and you fall off a ladder. You feel a wrenching pain in your back, but you can get up on your own and continue working. The real pain comes later. This is a sprain. In a sprain, a joint is forced to go beyond its normal range of motion. The ligament fibers overstretch and tear. This often happens with sudden twisting.

**Strain** – Muscle or tendon injury. If a muscle or tendon was injured when you fell off the ladder you have strain. Strains are not as serious as sprains. They often happen when you neglect to warm up your muscles before using them or when you have overworked weak back muscles. Years of tension or misuse can cause chronically strained muscles or tendons.

When you have a sprain or strain just remember R.I.C.E.:



**R – Rest:** Avoid putting weight on the injured joint for 24 to 48 hours.



**I – Ice:** Apply an ice pack right away to prevent or minimize swelling. Use for 10 minutes every hour.



**C – Compression:** Wrap the injury with a cloth bandage or compression sleeve to further reduce swelling.



**E – Elevation:** Keep the injured area on pillows while applying ice and anytime you are sitting or lying down.

By following these few simple rules, many of these injuries can be avoided:

1. Stretching when starting work, after breaks and lunch.
2. Getting help if the task requires it.
3. Push whenever possible, do not pull.
4. Always wear the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
5. Make sure your path is clear if you are carrying or pushing something.
6. Avoid bending at the waist when lifting a load.
7. Keep the load close to your body to avoid additional strain to your back.

## Discussion:

Get your employees involved in this talk by discussing real-life situations that may have resulted in sprains or strains.