

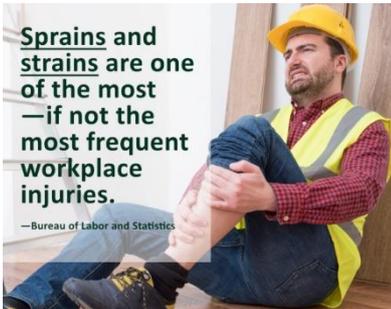
Sprains and strains

Sprains and strains are injuries to soft tissue but includes damage to muscles, ligaments, tendons, spinal discs, nerves, arteries and veins.

Whats the difference

A sprain is an overstretched, torn, or twisted ligament. A ligament is a tough band of fibrous tissue that connects bones to other bones or cartilage. Ligaments are usually located around joints. Commonly sprained areas include the wrists, ankles, thumbs, and knees.

A strain is an overstretched, torn, or twisted tendon or muscle. A tendon is a tough cord of fibrous tissue that connects muscles to bones. Commonly strained areas include the legs, knees, feet, and back.



Common types of sprain or strain injuries include:

- Back injuries
- Compressed nerves
- Ligament sprains (e.g. shoulders, knees)
- Joint dislocations
- Tendon injuries (e.g. To the hand, elbow and forearms).

Soft tissue injuries such as these can occur both suddenly or over a period of time. They occur frequently and can be painful and limit your ability to live your life (both at home and at work) as you'd like. Recovery time varies and in some instances an injury will not recover to 100%.

Gradual type injuries may result from repetitive work or regular low levels, extended periods in a static posture, working at awkward angles or pushing/ pulling/ restraining objects for example.

Injuries that occur suddenly might result from a slip, trip or fall – either at ground level or from height, working at awkward angles or twisting your body when moving an object for example.



Tips to protect yourself and others:

- Maintaining **good physical fitness** is essential in avoiding sprains and strains.
- **Stretching** and warming up is recommend before starting work (even more so as the weather cools down). Do not stretch aggressively as you may over-stretch and injure yourself.
- Keep your **work area tidy** – this means cleaning spills when they occur, not leaving items lying around and making sure that you have enough space to complete the task at hand.
- **Weather and lighting** can contribute to slips, trips and falls.
- Do not handle an object that is outside of your capacity. There is not legislated maximum weight limit, but if you're concerned that you're unable to safely manage an object, do not proceed before getting extra assistance – it's preferable to use mechanical aids (such as a trolley, forklift, pallet jack etc) where possible to ease the physical load.
- Watch where you're putting **your feet!**
 - Do not jump out of a forklift
 - Step carefully when coming down from a ladder
 - Be careful when walking on uneven surfaces – a common issue on building sites as a mis-step can easily result in a twisted knee or ankle.
 - Watch where you're walking
 - Do not carry a load that impedes your view as it's easy to trip or fall on an unexpected object.



- Comply with **rotational policies** in place on site. This has usually been implemented due to an identified risk.
- When manually moving items, **plan the move**, whether it's a lift, push or pull.



- Consider the weight, the route of travel, how you're planning on moving the item (e.g. trolley, lifting, craning etc)
- Move your feet accordingly –instead of moving their feet, people often twist their back, causing injury.
- Carry the item close to your body
- Lift slowly and smoothly to avoid any jerking motions. Again, if the object is too much, do not proceed.
- Lift with your Legs, not your Back

Points to remember:

- It's better for everyone to *prevent* a sprain or strain than to recover from one.
- Assess your workspace, equipment, the environment.
- Don't rush. Rushing can lead to injuries.
- Plan your next steps.
- Warm up before work and maintain good physical fitness to reduce the likelihood of injury.
- Report any incidents or concerns that you might have to RPR.

