

Sprains, Strains and Automobiles

The most recent statistics published by the Workers Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)¹ reports that although the workforce has grown by almost 9%, the number of registered claims has decreased by 36% and injured workers are returning safely to work sooner. Employers and workers alike are much better educated on safety today and the results show for it.



If you read further into the report, you'll see that the leading nature of injury for all five leading injury sources was **sprains and strains** and the part of body most often injured was the **lower back**.

With respect to work-related traumatic fatalities, the most significant cause continues to be **motor vehicle incidents**.



Strain

When a muscle or tendon is over-stretched or forcefully shortened, it can result in a stretch or tear injury, called a strain.

¹ <http://www.wsibstatistics.ca>

Signs and symptoms:

The signs and symptoms of a strain often show up many hours after the injury.

- sudden sharp pain in the strained muscle
- swelling of the muscles causing severe cramps (e.g. charley horse)
- bruising and muscle stiffness
- casualty may not be able to use the affected body part

First Aid for strains:

- Do a scene survey, remove hazards. Have the casualty stop the activity.
- Place the casualty in the position of most comfort. If there is loss of function, immobilize the injury as for a fracture.
- Give ongoing casualty care. Get medical help. To take the pressure off lower back muscles, place the casualty on his back with knees raised (support the knees by putting blankets under them).

Repetitive strain injury (RSI)

Muscles and tendons can be injured when they do the same movements over and over again, especially when the movement causes stress on the tissues. The injuries develop over a period of time – days, weeks or months – but can be very disabling. RSI injuries are also called overuse injuries: examples include tennis elbow, bursitis and carpal tunnel syndrome. First aid for RSI – stop the activity causing the injury and refer them to medical help.

Sprains

A sprain is an injury to a ligament and can range from a stretched to a completely torn ligament. Be cautious and give first aid as if the injury is serious. Sprains of the wrist, ankle, knee and shoulder are most common.



Signs and symptoms of a sprain:

- pain that may be severe and increase with movement of the joint
- loss of function
- swelling and discoloration

Use the RICE technique for injured bones, joints and muscles and seek medical attention for severe cases.

Rest – stop the activity

Immobilize – Sling, splint or wrap, depending on the site of the injury.

Cold – 15 minutes on, 15 minutes off. Never apply ice directly to skin.

Elevation – raise the injured part as long as it does not cause pain.

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