



The Difference Between Sprains and Strains

Sprain or Strain?

The terms sprain and strain are regularly used interchangeably, as they are similar. A **sprain** is when a **ligament** is overstretched or torn due to an injury. Ligaments are the fibrous connective tissue that attaches bone to bone and provide stability.

Generally, sprains can take anywhere from a few days to several weeks to heal, depending on the severity of the injury. A **strain** occurs when fibrous tissue of a **tendon**, or muscle is ripped. Strain can be a result of the same movements that cause a sprain.

While minor tears can take several weeks to heal, severe tendon and muscle tears may take several months. While rest and rehabilitation can be sufficient for minor tears, some tears can require surgery.

Mild Sprain

The affected ligament is stretched, however, the joint is still stable.

Moderate Sprain

The ligament has been partially torn but has not completely separated from the bone. This causes the joint to be unstable.

Severe Sprain

The damaged ligament has been completely torn or separated from the bone.

Sprain Symptoms

Hearing or feeling a 'pop' in your joint during injury

Localized pain

Inflammation and swelling

Bruising

Limited range of motion

Strain/Tear Symptoms

Sudden, severe pain

A "pop" sound during the time of the injury

The feeling of a loose joint

Inability to bear weight on the affected area

Immediate bruising

Immobility of the affected joint

Visual deformity