FIRST AID FACT SHEET
Sprains and Strains

What to do
1. Follow DRSABCD St John Action Plan.
2. Rest and reassure the casualty.
3. Manage as a fracture if any doubt.
4. Follow the RICE management plan:
   + REST the casualty and the injured part.
   + ICEPACK (cold compress) for fifteen (15) minutes.
   + COMPRESSION bandage after the icepack – apply firmly and extend well beyond the injury.
   + ELEVATE the limb.

Rules when using icepacks
+ Wrap icepack in a damp cloth.
+ Apply to the injured site for fifteen (15) minutes and then reapply every two (2) hours for first twenty-four (24) hours.
+ Never apply ice directly to the skin or onto an open wound. If no ice is available use a cloth wrung out in cold water – this will need replacing every ten (10) minutes.

5. Seek medical attention if in doubt or if no improvement after RICE.

Caused by
+ Falling and landing on arm.
+ Fall on the side of the foot.
+ Twisting a joint.

Signs & symptoms
+ Pain.
+ Swelling.
+ Bruising.
+ Loss of power.
+ Tenderness.
+ Muscle spasm.

A sprain is a severe wrench or twist of the ligaments, such as an ankle, wrist or other joint, that causes pain and swelling.

A strain is a force tending to pull or stretch muscles or tendons causing damage.

It can be difficult to tell whether the injury is a fracture, dislocation, sprain or strain. If in doubt, always treat as a fracture.

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In a medical emergency call Triple Zero (000)

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Information provided is as per Australian Resuscitation Council Guidelines. These first aid protocols are for the Australian market only. All care has been taken in preparing this information but St John takes no responsibility for its use. This information is not a substitute for practical first aid training with St John.