

## Strains and Sprains

The tasks you do here at Northwestern, such as lifting, pushing, or pulling heavy items, reaching overhead, working in awkward body postures, performing tasks repetitively, and standing or sitting for a prolonged amount of time, can lead to strain and sprain injuries - which are among the most common causes of workplace injuries.

A strain injury is a stretched or torn muscle tendon, while a sprain injury is a stretched or torn ligament. These injuries commonly occur in the back, arms, and shoulders, and common symptoms include pain, swelling, stiffness, and weakness.

### Treating a strain or sprain

If you believe you may have a strain and sprain injury at work, notify your supervisor and seek medical care. If the injury is serious, call 911 immediately. Typically, a minor strain and sprain injury may be treated by elevating the body part, resting, and applying ice, but you should always consult your medical care provider before administering self-treatment.

## Safety at Home

Many at-home activities (e.g., yard work, sports, painting, moving furniture) can expose you and your family to strain and sprain injuries. Below are some tips to keep you and your family safe:

- 9 When shoveling snow, use proper lifting techniques by keeping your back straight, lifting with your legs, and do not turn or twist your body.
- 9 Adequate sleep is very important to your health. If you regularly wake up with pain or discomfort, your mattress or pillow may be the problem, and you should consult a professional or your medical care provider for guidance.

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For Additional Information Contact Environmental Health and Safety at [ehs@northwestern.edu](mailto:ehs@northwestern.edu).

Tips for Success you'd like to share?