

## Patient information

# What is a soft tissue injury?

### Heading – 16pts

The term “soft tissue injury” is used to describe an injury to the soft tissues of the body (muscles, tendons etc) rather than the harder bony structures.

A soft tissue injury can affect any part of the body and it is usually self-limiting in the time it takes to heal.

Soft tissue injuries include bruises, sprains and muscle contusion (bruise to the muscle).

### How to treat soft tissue injuries

In most cases soft tissue injuries will heal without specialised treatment, but there are a few things that can help to reduce the swelling and the pain.

- Rest - You need to rest the affected limb to help with the recovery, but do not become immobile as the affected limb will become stiff and uncomfortable.
- Avoid forceful and strenuous activity as it may make the injury worse.
- Avoid running during the acute phase of soft tissue injury.
- Ice - Make an ice pack from a small packet of peas (or similar) which needs to be wrapped in a damp cloth to prevent it from damaging the skin and should only be held on the area for 5 - 10 minutes. This should be repeated every hour or two or as often as possible for the first 48 hours of the injury.
- Painkillers - If necessary, take simple painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen. These can be taken together and should be taken regularly throughout the day.

- **Elevation** - Raising your injured limb will help to reduce the swelling. Try to do this as often as possible. If you have an ankle or foot injury, elevate the leg on a foot stool.
- **Compression bandaging** - Compression bandages are no longer routinely used for injuries as they have no benefit in the healing time but can be worn to provide comfort on sprained limbs. These can be purchased from most pharmacies.

Most soft tissue injuries heal within two to three weeks. If you still have significant pain or stiffness of the limb, please seek further medical advice.

Remain well hydrated and remain as active as possible to reduce your risks of developing a deep vein thrombosis (DVT).

For further information, or if you have any questions in relation to your attendance to the DVT clinic, please call the DVT clinic on 01284 713092 (Monday to Saturday 8.00am to 4.00pm) or consult your GP.

### **Clinical research**

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email [info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk](mailto:info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk). This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

### **Accessibility**

If you require this leaflet in a different format, please contact the patient advice and liaison service on 01284 712555 or email [PALS@wsh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALS@wsh.nhs.uk)

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