

# Soft Tissue Injuries

## Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet will provide you with information regarding what to expect following a soft tissue injury.

It will describe some of the possible signs and symptoms and treatments you will be given.

## What is it?

Soft tissue injuries include all injuries to the soft tissues rather than the bones of the body. Examples of soft tissues include bruises, sprains and muscle contusions.

Bruises are caused by damage to small blood vessels which bleed under the skin producing the characteristic discolouration and swelling.

Sprains are caused by damage to the fibres within the ligaments which reinforce joints. Muscle contusions are caused by tearing muscle fibres.

Most soft tissue injuries will heal quickly over a period of weeks but it can be months to regain the full strength and movements back.

## What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms experienced are pain, swelling and inability to put weight through the affected limb.

There may well be a great deal of bruising. If nerves are involved then you may get some pins and needles or numbness in the affected limb. Please tell us about this in fracture clinic.

## How is the diagnosis made?

The diagnosis of a soft tissue injury is made based on your history of the injury and the doctor's examination. It may also be made after obtaining normal investigations such as an X-ray.

## Treatment

Soft tissue injuries mostly heal without any treatment but there are several simple things you can do to help with your recovery.

## Rest

This is important in allowing the structures damaged to heal but does not mean that you keep the affected area still. You need to regularly move the affected limb to avoid it becoming stiff.

You should not stress the limb and avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activities such as running or jogging if your lower limbs have been affected.

## Ice

Applying ice packs (from over the counter packs to a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp cloth) to the area for periods of 5-10 minutes will help with swelling and pain. This only needs to be done for the first 48 hours after your injury.

## Elevation

Simply elevating the affected limb will reduce swelling. This can be achieved with a stool or a pillow depending on which limb is affected.

## Painkillers

You may require painkillers to keep mobile. Please discuss these with us in clinic.

If you are not coping with the pain after several weeks despite oral medications your GP may refer you to specialist pain services to discuss other options.

## Does treatment help?

Whichever treatment you are offered in the fracture clinic it will always aim to improve your quality of life, functioning and reduce pain.

## What if I am not improving?

If it has been over the expected recovery time or the affected limb is becoming stiff and painful then we would want you to seek medical attention early so we can identify any problems we could help you with.

## Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?

Your GP will be happy to give you advice for this very common complaint, if you need more discussion than you have had in the out-patient clinic.

If you feel your query needs a more specialist answer then please call fracture clinic on the following number **0151 529 2516**



### If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on audio tape or disk and in other languages on request. Please contact:

**Tel No: 0151 529 2906**

**Email: [interpretationandtranslation@liverpoolft.nhs.uk](mailto:interpretationandtranslation@liverpoolft.nhs.uk)**