Sprains and strains can be caused by repetitive motions, awkward posture or even prolonged positions. To prevent discomfort, be sure to do the following:

1. Set up your workstation properly; make your station and tools work for you
2. Keep frequently used items close to you to prevent extended reaches
3. Don’t cradle the phone. Hold the phone in your hand for short calls, use the speakerphone option, or consider a phone rest or headset if you make or receive a high volume of calls.
4. Take frequent breaks. Get up from your chair every hour to move around and change positions.
5. Stretch throughout the day. Hourly stretch breaks will reduce muscle tension and fatigue. These breaks also improve blood flow to overworked muscles.

At Play

1. Always stretch before and after physical activity whether it is a recreational sport, a hike or lifting at work
2. Avoid strenuous activity when tired or sore, this can significantly increase your risk of injury
3. Use the proper equipment for the job
4. Wear appropriate footwear
5. Before you begin, size up the job. Plan your work.
6. Use sound lifting principles:
   - Keep your back straight
   - Lift with your legs, not with your back
   - Hold your abdominal muscles tight, but don’t hold your breath
   - Keep the load close to you
   - A load held an arm’s length away increases the strain on your back 10X
   - Avoid twisting your back—pivot your feet instead
Fast Facts
Preventing Sprains and Strains

Healthy Lifestyle
- Adopt good postural habits
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of water (80-100 oz per day)
- Maintain a good level of flexibility—daily stretching program
- Maintain good strength in your back, arms and legs.
- Participate in a regular exercise program
- Avoid smoking:
  - Smoking deprives blood of adequate oxygen and significantly increases risk of soft tissue sprains and strains

First Aid Treatment for Sprains and Strains

Rest: Practice “Active Rest”, which is avoiding those activities which cause or increase pain

Ice: Ice reduces the inflammation following a sprain or strain. Apply ice for 15 minutes every few hours to the affected area for the first few days following an injury

Compression: To reduce the swelling, compress the area with an elastic bandage. Do not wrap too tight as this may impair circulation.

Elevation: To reduce the swelling, elevate the injured area above your heart, especially at night

The risk of sprains and strains can increase by...

- High percent body fat: 2.7 times
- Body mass index—Grade 1 obesity: 6.7 times
- Low aerobic power: 10.1 times
- Low sit and reach flexibility: 3.9 times
- Used to smoke or still smokes: 1.8 times

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