Citrus College Student Health Center
Homecare Instructions for Strains/Sprains/Fractures

**Strain:** A muscle strain is often known as a “pulled muscle”. When the demand on the muscle is too great muscle soreness will result. Serious muscle strains can actually cause tearing of the muscle. Common areas of strains are the front/back of the thigh and the groin.

**Sprain:** Ligaments hold bones together and keep joints in position. When ligaments are torn, pulled or strained the resulting injury is known as a sprain. Knees, fingers and ankles are most susceptible to sprains.

**Fracture:** Anytime a bone is hit with a force greater than it can withstand a fracture or “break” occurs. The seriousness of a fracture depends on its location and the damage done to the bone and tissue around it.

Strains, sprains and fractures can be quite serious. They all can cause significant amounts of pain and swelling. Any of these injuries may require splinting, casting or surgery. Recovery from these injuries varies based on the individual’s age, overall condition and health/medical history. To help your injury heal as fast as possible remember the acronym: **RICE** (R-rest, I-ice, C-compression, E-elevation)

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

- **Rest** the affected part. Avoid any further stress or injury by limiting excessive exertion of the affected part and activities that cause significant pain to the affected area. Gradually resume activities.
- **Ice** the affected area the first 48 hours. Apply ice packs (frozen peas work well) for 10-15 minutes to help reduce/prevent swelling. Avoid heat the first 24-48 hours, as it will increase swelling. After 48 hours you can use heat if you desire soaking the affected part 2-3 times/day for about 20 minutes or using a warming pad. Do not soak an area if you have a cast.
- **Compress** the affected part with an elastic bandage/splint or sling to immobilize the affected area and assist in reducing swelling.
- **Elevate** the affected part and try to keep it higher that the level of your heart. This also helps to reduce swelling and promote blood return.

If you have splint/sling or “ace” wrap adjust it if you notice it becoming too tight, too loose increased swelling or color changes.

If you have a cast, your private health care provider should check it within the first 24 hours. Keep the cast clean and dry. Report to your health care provider any of the following: increase swelling, pain, numbness or loss of feeling in the skin, color changes to the skin/nails, temperature change to the skin or a foul odor to the cast.