

Accelerating the Healing of Strains and Sprains Using a Chinese Herbal Patch

Ligament Sprains

Ligaments are the connective tissue made up of collagenous fibers that attach bone to bone. Ligaments help stabilize joints with range of motion and sustain a tensile force. A ligament sprain often occurs when there is a traumatic joint injury.

The body's natural healing process for a ligament sprain can be divided into three stages. First, the ligament ends retract and a hematoma is formed. Second, scar tissue is formed over the course of a few weeks. The third stage consists of matrix remodeling in which the scar tissue is replaced by proteoglycan and collagen.

Ligament injuries are most common in the ankles, wrists, shoulders, and knees including AC joint separations, anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and medial collateral ligament (MCL) injuries. Depending on the severity, ligament injuries can be classified into three degrees:

- A *first-degree* sprain is the least severe. There is typically little tearing, pain or swelling, and joint stability is still good. It usually takes 1-2 weeks to heal.
- A *second-degree* sprain has the broadest range of damage with moderate ligament tear, moderate instability, and moderate to severe pain and swelling. Recovery may take 3-6 weeks.
- A *third-degree* sprain is the most severe. The ligament is completely ruptured, the joint is unstable, and there is severe pain and swelling. They often need surgical repair. Recovery requires 8-12 months.

Muscle Strains

Skeletal muscles consist of an arrangement of fibers that are connected to tendons. Each muscle fiber is made up of cylindrical muscle cells called a myofibril. Muscle tears occur when muscle fibers are damaged due to muscle overloading or fatigue.

The natural healing process of a muscle tear also occurs in three stages. First, the ruptured myofibers contract and form a hematoma. Then myogenic reserve cells are activated and begin repairing the damaged myofibers. In the third stage, the regenerated myofibers mature and the remodeling phase is complete. Muscle tears are most common in the hamstrings, quadriceps, calf and back.

- A *first-degree* strain indicates the least severe damage with little muscle tearing and mild tenderness. There is also mild pain with full range of motion. Recovery takes about 2-3 weeks.
- A *second-degree* strain occurs when the muscle has been torn and about 80 percent of tissue fibers have been ruptured. There is usually more pain, edema, and bruising with swelling caused by the broken blood vessels; range of motion is also significantly reduced. Typically, it takes 2-3 weeks to have any improvement in the pain and swelling and 3-6 weeks for a full

recovery. It is common for athletes to resume their activity too soon afterward, which can easily elevate the sprain to a third-degree injury.

- A *third-degree* strain involves completely ruptured muscle tissues. The area of the body is no longer functional. There is usually visible bruising, pain, and the possibility of an avulsion fracture. They often need surgical repair and require at least three months of rehabilitation after surgery.

Wellness Recommendation

Alternative therapies are becoming a more popular treatment for sprains and strains due to the slow healing process that occurs with mobilization and ice alone. Acupuncture has been shown to accelerate the healing of injured tendons and muscles. Herbs, used in conjunction with acupuncture, can even further improve and accelerate healing in sprain or strain patients.

The healing of a sprain or strain can be significantly accelerated by using Chinese herbal patches which consist of myrrh, Himalayan teasel root, twotooth achranthes root and other Chinese herbs.* The herbal patch helps speed up the healing by increasing localized blood flow to enhance nutrient supply. The nutrient supply allows the injury to heal quickly.

The herbal patch also increases local lymphatic circulation, therefore reducing inflammation and removing the dead tissue fragments promptly. The herbs also increase the localized temperature, which speeds up the biosynthesis of new tissues. Muscle and ligament repair occur almost instantaneously upon application of the patch. The scar tissue formation and remodeling are bypassed.

Based on clinical experience, use of the herbal patch shortens the healing time of a first-degree sprain / strain from 1-3 weeks to two days and a second-degree injury from 3-6 weeks to 5-7 days. For third-degree injuries, it only requires approximately 17 days of rehabilitation. Patients are usually not susceptible to another injury afterward.

Sample Case Study

Successful Healing of a Tendon Strain at Spleen 4 — Patricia Blaine, LAc, Washington

A female patient suffered from severe pain (10 out of 10) caused by an acute tendon strain at Spleen 4. The patient was still using crutches about a week after the injury occurred. The area of concern had been red, swollen and inflamed (toxins seemed to come out). It appeared the patient developed cellulitis.

A systemic immune treatment was prescribed, and acupuncture was applied outside the inflamed area of the foot. Three herbal patches were used to speed up the healing process. In addition, a cold-heat technique was applied to stimulate the circulation at deep levels and reduce the intensity of the inflammation (IR heat and cold pack). Once the irritation of the infected area had been eliminated, acupuncture was applied there as well.

After two weeks of treatment, the patient's pain level had been reduced by 80 percent. The treatment sped up the recovery tremendously. The results were remarkable given that the patient came for a total of six treatments within two weeks. There was no maintenance needed.

**Other patch herbs:* Cassia bark; Chinese angelica; Chinese asfetida; Chinese silkvine root-bark; common flowering quince fruit; doubleteeth pubescent angelica root; incised notopterygium rhizome or root; lesser galangal rhizome; pine nodular branch; prepared Ksnezoff monkshood root; red peony root; and sappan wood.

DECEMBER 2019

©2024 Acupuncture Today™ All Rights Reserved