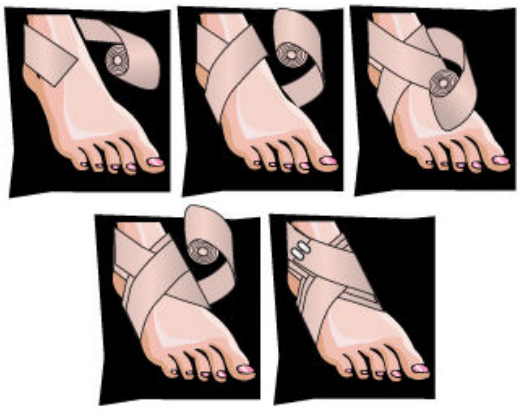
Elastic Bandage and RICE

Elastic bandages come in different shapes and sizes. They perform different functions. Your caregiver will help you to decide what is best for your protection, recovery, or rehabilitation following an injury. The following are some general tips to help you use an elastic bandage.



- Use the bandage as directed by the maker of the bandage you are using.
- **Do not** wrap it too tight. This may cut off the circulation of the arm or leg below the bandage.
- If part of your body beyond the bandage becomes blue, numb, or swollen, it is too tight. Loosen the bandage as needed to prevent these problems.
- See your caregiver or trainer if the bandage seems to be making your problems worse rather than better.

Bandages may be a reminder to you that you have an injury. However, they provide very little support. The few pounds of support they provide are minor considering the pressure it takes to injure a joint or tear ligaments. Therefore, the joint will not be able to handle all of the wear and tear it could before the injury.

The routine care of many injuries includes **Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation** (RICE).

- Rest is required to allow your body to heal. Generally, routine activities can be resumed when comfortable. Injured tendons and bones take about 6 weeks to heal.
- Icing the injury helps keep the swelling down and reduces pain. **Do not** apply ice directly to the skin. Put ice in a plastic bag. Place a towel between the skin and the bag. This will prevent frostbite to the skin. Apply ice bags to the injured area for 20 minutes, every 2 hours while awake. Do this for the first 24 to 48 hours, then as directed by your caregiver.
- Compression helps keep swelling down, gives support, and helps with discomfort. If an elastic bandage has been applied today, it should be removed and reapplied every 3 to 4 hours. It should not be applied tightly, but firmly enough to keep swelling down. **Watch fingers or toes for swelling, bluish discoloration, coldness, numbness, or increased pain. If any of these problems occur, remove the bandage and reapply it more loosely. If these problems persist, contact your caregiver.**
- Elevation helps reduce swelling and decreases pain. The injured area (arms, hands, legs, or feet) should be placed near to or above the heart (center of the chest) if able.

Persistent pain and inability to use the injured area for more than 2 to 3 days are warning signs. You should see a caregiver for a follow-up visit as soon as possible. Initially, a minor broken bone (*hairline fracture*) may not be seen on X-rays. It may take 7 to 10 days to finally show up. Continued pain and swelling show that further evaluation and/or X-rays are needed. **Make a follow-up visit with your caregiver.** A specialist in reading X-rays (*radiologist*) will read your X-rays again.

FINDING OUT THE RESULTS OF YOUR TEST

Not all test results are available during your visit. If your test results are not back during the visit, make an appointment with your caregiver to find out the results. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your test results.

Document Released: 01/06/2009 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
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