Arthralgia (Pain in a Joint)

Your caregiver has diagnosed you as suffering from an arthralgia. *Arthralgia* simply means pain in a joint. This can come from many reasons including:

- Bruising the joint which causes soreness *(inflammation*) in the joint
- From the wear and tear on the joints which occur as we grow older (*osteoarthritis*)
- Overusing the joint,
- Various forms of arthritis
- Infections of the joint

Regardless of the cause of pain in your joint, most of these different pains respond to anti-inflammatory drugs and rest. The exception to this is when a joint is infected, and these cases are treated with medications which kill germs *(antibiotics*) if it is an infection caused by a germ *(bacterial infection*).

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Rest the injured area for 1 week or as directed by your caregiver. Then slowly start using the joint as directed by your caregiver and as the pain allows. Crutches as directed may be useful if the ankles, knees or hips are involved. If the knee was splinted or casted, continue use and care as directed. If an *ace bandage* (stretchy, elastic wrapping bandage) has been applied today, it should be removed and re-applied every 3 to 4 hours. It should not be applied tightly, but firmly enough to keep swelling down. **Watch toes and feet for swelling, bluish discoloration, coldness, numbness or excessive pain. If any of these *symptoms* (problems) occur, remove the ace bandage and re-apply more loosely. If these symptoms persist, contact your caregiver or return to this location.**
- For the first 24 hours, keep the injured extremity elevated on 2 pillows while lying down.
- Apply ice for fifteen minutes to the sore joint every couple hours while awake for the first half day, then four times per day for the first 48 hours. Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin.
- Wear any splinting, casting, elastic bandage applications, or slings as instructed.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. *Do not use **aspirin** immediately after the injury unless instructed by your physician.* Aspirin can cause increased bleeding and bruising of the tissues.
- If you were given crutches, continue to use them as instructed and do not resume weight bearing on the sore joint until instructed.

Persistent pain and inability to use the sore joint as directed for more than 2 to 3 days are warning signs indicating that you should see a caregiver for a follow-up visit as soon as possible. Initially, a hairline *fracture* (break in bone) may not be evident on x-rays. Persistent pain and swelling indicate that further evaluation, non-weight bearing or use of joint (use of crutches and or slings as instructed), and/or further x-rays are indicated. X-rays may sometimes not show a small fracture until a week or ten days later. **Make a follow-up appointment with your own caregiver or one to whom we have referred you.** A *radiologist* (specialist in reading x-rays) may re-read your x-rays. **Make sure you know how you are to obtain your x-ray results. Do not assume everything is normal if you do not hear from us.**

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF: Bruising, swelling, or pain increases.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your fingers or toes are numb or blue.
- The pain is not responding to medications and continues to stay the same or get worse.
- The pain in your joint becomes severe.
- You develop a fever over 102° F (38.9° C).
- It becomes impossible to move or use the joint.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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