Pediatric Sprain

Your child has a sprained joint. A sprain means that a band of tissue that connects two bones (*ligament*) has been injured. The ligament may have been overly stretched or some of its fibers may have been torn.

CAUSES

Common causes of sprains include:

- Falls.
- Twisting injury.
- Direct trauma.
- Sudden or unusual stress or bending of a joint outside of its normal range. This could happen during sports, play, or as a result of a fall.

SYMPTOMS

Sprains cause:

- Pain
- Bruising
- Swelling
- Tenderness
- Inability to use the joint or limb

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis is based on:

- The story of the injury.
- The physical exam.

In most cases, no testing is needed. If your caregiver is concerned about a more serious problem, x-rays or other imaging tests may be done to rule out a broken bone, a cartilage injury, or a ligament tear.

TREATMENT

Treatment depends on what joint is injured and how severe the injury is. Your child's caregiver may suggest:

- Ice packs for 20-30 minutes every 2 hours and elevation until the pain and swelling are better.
- Resting the joint or limb.
- Crutches
- No weight bearing until pain is much better.
- Splints, braces, casting or elastic wraps.
- Physical therapy.
- Pain medicine.
- Protective splinting or taping to prevent future sprains.

In rare cases where the same joint is sprained many times, surgery may be needed to prevent further problems.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Follow your child's caregiver's instructions for treatment and follow up.
- If your child's caregiver suggests over the counter pain medicine, do not use aspirin in children under the age of 19 years.
- Keep the child from sports or PE until your child's caregiver says it is OK.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child's injury remains tender or if weight bearing is still painful after 5-7 days of rest and treatment.
- Symptoms are worse.

- Your child's cast or splint hurts or pinches.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- If a cast or splint was applied:
  - Your child's limb is pale or cold.
  - There is numbness in the limb.
  - Your child's pain is worse.

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