Foot Sprain

The muscles and cord like structures which attach muscle to bone *(tendons*) that surround the feet are made up of units. A foot sprain can occur at the weakest spot in any of these units. This condition is most often caused by injury to or overuse of the foot, as from playing contact sports, or aggravating a previous injury, or from poor conditioning, or obesity.

DIAGNOSIS:

Diagnosis of this condition is usually by your own observation. If problems continue, a caregiver may be required for further evaluation and treatment. X-rays may be required to make sure there are not breaks in the bones *(fractures*) present. Continued problems may require physical therapy for treatment.

SYMPTOMS OF FOOT SPRAIN ARE:

- Pain with movement of the foot.
- Tenderness and swelling at the injury site.
- Loss of strength is present in moderate or severe sprains.

THE THREE GRADES OR SEVERITY OF FOOT SPRAIN ARE:

- Mild (Grade I): Slightly pulled muscle without tearing of muscle or tendon fibers or loss of strength.
- Moderate (Grade II): Tearing of fibers in a muscle, tendon, or at the attachment to bone, with small decrease in strength.
- Severe (Grade III): Rupture of the muscle-tendon-bone attachment, with separation of fibers. Severe sprain requires surgical repair. Often repeating (*chronic*) sprains are caused by overuse. Sudden (*acute*) sprains are caused by direct injury or over-use.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Apply ice to the injury for 10 to 20 minutes, 3 to 4 times per day. Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin.
- An elastic wrap (like an Ace bandage) may be used to keep swelling down.
- Keep foot above the level of the heart, or at least raised on a footstool, when swelling and pain are present.
- Try to avoid use other than gentle range of motion while the foot is painful. Do not resume use until instructed by your caregiver. Then begin use gradually, not increasing use to the point of pain. If pain does develop, decrease use and continue the above measures, gradually increasing activities that do not cause discomfort, until you gradually achieve normal use.
- Use crutches if and as instructed, and for the length of time instructed.
- Keep injured foot and ankle wrapped between treatments.
- Massage foot and ankle for comfort and to keep swelling down. Massage from the toes up towards the knee.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

PREVENTION OF FOOT SPRAIN:

- Use strength and conditioning exercises appropriate for your sport.
- Warm up properly prior to working out.
- Use athletic shoes that are made for the sport you are participating in.
- Allow adequate time for healing. Early return to activities makes repeat injury more likely, and can lead to an unstable arthritic foot that can result in prolonged disability. Mild sprains generally heal in 3 to 10 days, with moderate and severe sprains taking 2 to 10 weeks. Your caregiver can help you determine the proper time required for healing.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your pain and swelling increase, or pain is not controlled with medications.
- You have loss of feeling in your foot or your foot turns cold or blue.
- You develop new, unexplained symptoms, or an increase of the symptoms that brought you to your caregiver.

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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