Sprained Joint

A sprain is a tear or stretch in the ligaments that hold the joint together. **Severe sprains may need as long as 3-6 weeks of immobilization and/or exercises to heal completely**. Sprained joints should be rested and protected. If not, they can become unstable and prone to re-injury. Proper treatment can reduce your pain, shorten the period of disability, and reduce the risk of repeated injuries.

TREATMENT

- Rest and elevate the injured joint to reduce pain and swelling.
- Apply ice packs to the injury for 20-30 minutes every 2-3 hours for the next 2-3 days.
- Keep the injury wrapped in a compression bandage or splint as long as the joint is painful or as instructed by your caregiver.
- Do not use the injured joint until it is completely healed to prevent re-injury and chronic instability. Follow the instructions of your caregiver.
- Long-term sprain management may require exercises and/or treatment by a physical therapist. Taping or special braces may help stabilize the joint until it is completely better.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop increased pain or swelling of the joint.
- You develop increasing redness and warmth of the joint.
- You develop a fever.
- It becomes stiff.
- Your hand or foot gets cold or numb.

Document Released: 01/25/2006 Document Re-Released: 03/16/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.