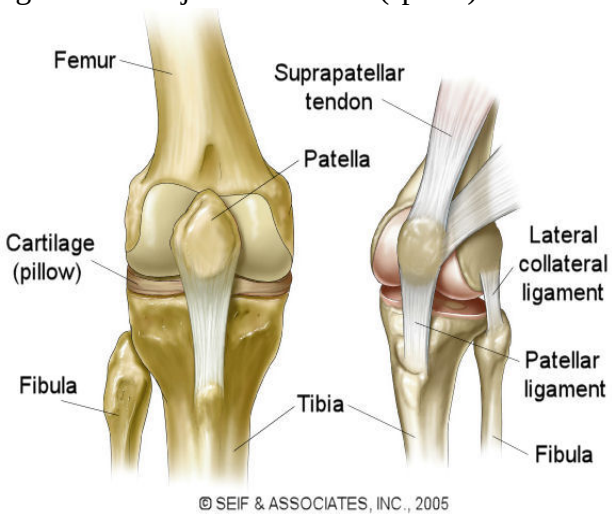
Knee Sprain

You have a knee sprain. Sprains are painful injuries to the joints. They are a partial or complete tearing of ligaments. Ligaments are tough, fibrous tissues that hold bones together at the joints. A strain (sprain) has occurred when a ligament is stretched or damaged. This injury may take several weeks to heal. This is often the same length of time as a bone *fracture* (break in bone) takes to heal. Even though a *fracture* (bone break) may not have occurred, the recovery times may be similar.



HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Rest the injured area as directed. Then slowly start using the joint as directed by your caregiver and as the pain allows. Use crutches as directed. If the knee was splinted or casted, continue use and care as directed. If an ace 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 toes and feet for swelling, bluish discoloration, coldness, numbness or excessive pain. If any of these symptoms occur, remove the ace bandage and reapply more loosely. If these symptoms persist, seek medical attention.**
- For the first 24 hours, lie down. Keep the injured extremity elevated on two pillows.
- Apply ice to the injured area for fifteen minutes every couple hours. Do this while awake for the first half day. Repeat this 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, or elastic bandage applications 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 caregiver.* Aspirin can cause increased bleeding and bruising of the tissues.
- If you were given crutches, continue to use them as instructed. Do not resume weight bearing on the affected extremity until instructed.

Persistent pain and inability to use the injured area as directed for more than 2 to 3 days are warning signs. If this happens you should see a caregiver for a follow-up visit as soon as possible. Initially, a hairline fracture (this is the same as a broken bone) may not be evident on x-rays. Persistent pain and swelling indicate that further evaluation, non-weight bearing (use of crutches 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 get 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
- You have cold or numb toes
- You have continuing difficulty or pain with walking.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your toes are cold, numb or blue.
- The pain is not responding to medications and continues to stay the same or get worse.

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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