

Splints for Broken Bones

What is a splint?

A splint is a support for all or part of an arm or leg. It protects an injured area from more injury. It also helps reduce pain that may be caused from movement.

What types of injuries may require a splint?

Splints are used for strains, sprains and fractures (broken bones).



What kinds of splints are there?

Splints may be made of many types of materials. There are cloth, metal, plastic-Velcro®, fiberglass and plaster splints. An elastic bandage may also be used as a splint.



Why not just use a cast?

A splint may be all that is needed for some broken bones to heal. For other broken bones, a splint is used first and later a cast may be needed. This is because swelling in the area around the broken bone increases for the first 24 to 48 hours. If a cast is put on too soon, the cast may get too tight. When a cast is too tight, there is less blood flow (circulation) to the injured area. This can cause the fingers or toes to be pale, bluish in color and feel numb. There may also be more pain when a cast is too tight. If the cast is too tight it must be cut open to increase blood flow. This will decrease the pain. By using a splint first, the cast is put on after the swelling stops. A splint may be used to give extra protection after a cast is taken off.

How do I take care of my child with a splint?

- Keep the splint on your child unless you are given other directions by your child's doctor, nurse or therapist.
- The splint should be kept clean and dry.
- Elevate (raise) the area where the splint is used. Raise it higher than your child's heart. This helps reduce swelling.
- Cold packs may be put on for _____ minutes every _____ hours. This may reduce pain and swelling. Use an ice bag (or ice cubes in a plastic bag). **Do not** use the cold pack for more than the time indicated. It is important to take off the cold pack for a while and then put it back on later. Always use a towel between the ice bag and skin. This will prevent injury to the skin from the cold.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has:

- Pain that does not get better in the injured area.
- Fingers or toes that are pale, bluish in color.
- Less feeling (numb) in the fingers or toes.
- Special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.