

# Knee Injury

## Definition

- Minor injury to the knee.
- Your child can walk, but with mild pain.
- If unsure, contact your child's doctor.

## Health Information

### Types of Knee Injuries

- Sprains - stretches and tears of ligaments.
- Strains - stretches and tears of muscles (a pulled muscle).
- Muscle bruise from a direct blow.
- Bone bruise from a direct blow.
- Fractures (broken bones).
- Dislocations (bone out of joint).

### Sprained Knee: A Common Injury

- Ligaments on both sides of the knee help to stabilize the knee.
- These ligaments can get stretched with twisting injuries or being hit from the side.
- This is called a sprained knee. It's a common injury to the knee.
- The main symptom is pain and tenderness on the side of the sprained knee. Some swelling may also occur there.
- The pain is made worse with knee movement and walking.

### Prevention

- Supervise young children carefully.
- Teach older children about high-risk behaviors.

## Care Advice

### 1. Key Points

- Bruised bones or muscles can be treated at home.
- Many sprained knees also can be treated at home.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

### 2. Treatment of Mild Knee Sprains

- First Aid: Apply a compression wrap (elastic bandage) right away to limit bleeding and swelling. Reason: The more the initial bleeding and swelling, the longer the recovery.
- Standard treatment is R.I.C.E. (rest, ice, compression, and elevation) for the first 24 to 48 hours.
- Apply compression with a snug, elastic bandage for 48 hours. Numbness, tingling, or increased pain means the bandage is too tight.
- Apply crushed ice in a plastic bag or a cold pack for 20 minutes. Repeat for 20 minutes every hour for the first 4 hours. Then only as needed.
- Elevate and rest the injured knee for 24 hours.
- After 24 hours, allow any activity that doesn't cause pain.

### 3. **Cold Pack for Initial Pain**

- For pain, swelling or bruising with any knee injury, use a cold pack. You can also use ice wrapped in a wet cloth.
- Put it on the area for 20 minutes.
- Repeat for 20 minutes every hour for the first 4 hours, then only as needed.
- Reason: Helps with the pain and helps stop any bleeding.
- Caution: Avoid frostbite.

### 4. **Heat for Pain After 48 Hours**

- If pain lasts over 2 days, put heat on the sore area.
- Use a heat pack, heating pad or warm wet washcloth.
- Do this for 10 minutes, as needed. Reason: increases blood flow and speeds healing.
- Caution: Avoid burns.

### 5. **Pain Medicine**

- For pain relief, give acetaminophen every 4 hours or ibuprofen every 6 hours as needed (See Dosage table).
- Ibuprofen may be more effective for this type of pain.
- Also continue compression with the elastic bandage as long as it helps the pain.

### 6. **Activity and Movement During Recovery**

- Rest the injured part for the first 24 hours.
- Then start moving the joint as tolerated. Do this at least 3 times per day.
- **Reason:** This helps prevent tight muscles and joints. It helps maintain range of motion.
- As pain improves, slowly increase activity. Allow any activity that does not cause pain.
- Here's a good rule: If it HURTS, don't do it.

### 7. **What to Expect**

- Pain and swelling usually peak on day 2 or 3.
- Swelling is usually gone by 7 days.
- Pain may take 2 weeks to completely resolve.
- Protect the area from further injury until healed.

## Call Your Doctor If

- Pain not improved after 3 days
- Pain or swelling lasts over 2 weeks
- Can't walk
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

### **Pediatric Care Advice**

**Author:** Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

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