Elbow Sprain: Care Instructions

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Your Care Instructions

An elbow sprain occurs when you overstretch or tear the ligaments around your elbow. Ligaments are the tough tissues that connect one bone to another. A sprain can happen when you fall or when you play sports or do chores around the house.

Most sprains will heal with some treatment at home.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Follow your doctor's directions for wearing a splint, elbow pad, sling, or elastic bandage. Wrapping the elbow may help reduce or prevent swelling.
- Rest and protect your elbow. Do not do any activity that hurts your elbow.
- Apply ice or a cold pack to your elbow for 10 to 20 minutes at a time to reduce swelling. Try this every 1 to 2 hours for 3 days (when you are awake) or until the swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- After 2 or 3 days, if your swelling is gone, apply a heating pad on low or a warm cloth to your elbow. This helps keep your arm flexible. Some doctors suggest that you go back and forth between hot and cold. Keep the splint dry.
- Prop up your elbow on pillows while you apply ice or anytime you sit or lie down. Try to keep the elbow at or above the level of your heart to help reduce swelling.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.

    - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
    - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Return to your usual level of activity slowly.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your pain is worse.
- You have new or increased swelling in your elbow or hand.
- You cannot bend your arm.
- You have a fever.
- Your elbow looks red.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your elbow, hand, or fingers.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your pain is not better after 2 weeks.

Where can you learn more?

Go to https://www.healthwise.net/patiented

Enter **T774** in the search box to learn more about **"Elbow Sprain: Care Instructions".**

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