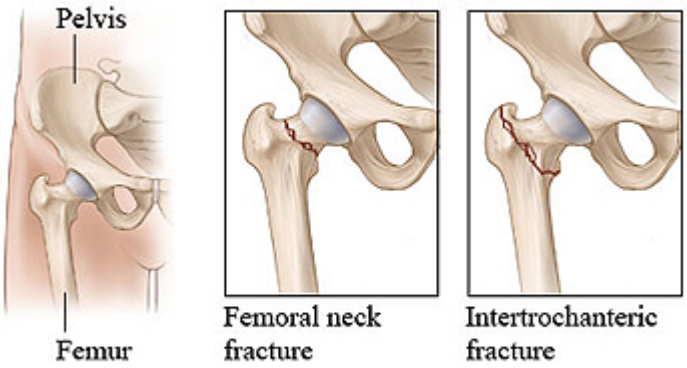
Hip Stress Fracture: Care Instructions



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Your Care Instructions

A hip fracture is a break in the upper part of the thighbone (femur), which is the bone that fits into the socket of the hip joint. Severe fractures are usually treated with surgery. Stress fractures, which are tiny hairline cracks in the bone, may or may not require surgery.

Hairline fractures often are caused by ongoing overuse, such as from regular long-distance running. They can also be caused by a fall, slip, or stumble. They cause pain in the hip during and after use, especially with strenuous activities such as running or cycling. They can also cause groin pain.

You heal best when you take good care of yourself. Eat a variety of healthy foods, and don't smoke.

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?

- Rest your leg as much as you can. Follow your doctor's instructions for using crutches or a walker. Too much activity or weight on the hip fracture can cause it to get worse.
- Put ice or a cold pack on your hip for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- Be safe with medicines. 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.
- Do exercises or physical therapy as directed by your doctor. Two exercises that may help you recover are quad strengthening and toe pumping.

    - To strengthen your thigh muscles (quadriceps, or quads), sit with your leg straight and supported. (It works well to sit on the floor or a firm bed.) Tighten your quads for 6 seconds at a time. Then rest the muscles for up to 10 seconds before tightening them again. Repeat 8 to 12 times. If this feels bad in the front or back of your knee, try placing a rolled-up washcloth or dish towel under your knee.
    - Toe pumping exercises can help increase blood flow and lower your chance of a blood clot. This exercise can be done anywhere. Point your toes up toward your head so that the calves of your legs are stretched, then point your toes away from you. Repeat the movement 10 times every 20 minutes, or whenever you think of it. This exercise is especially important to do when you are sitting for long periods of time.
- Talk to your doctor about medicines or diet changes that can help make your bones stronger.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have severe pain.
- You have sudden chest pain and shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new weakness in your leg.
- You fall on or hurt the injured hip.
- Your pain gets much worse.
- Your leg is cool or pale or changes color.
- You have signs of a blood clot, such as:
    - Pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin.
    - Redness and swelling in your leg or groin.

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

- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

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

Enter **I438** in the search box to learn more about **"Hip Stress Fracture: Care Instructions".**

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