

# Bruises, Sprains, Strains & Fractures

## Bruises, Sprains, Strains

Even with the most vigilant protection and prevention methods, an athlete can get injured. The most dramatic injuries usually occur from a single blow to the body.

- **Bruise:** Swelling and bleeding in the muscle or other body tissues, causing skin discoloration and tenderness.
- **Sprain:** A stretch or tear of a ligament, the tissues that connect bones and cartilage.
- **Strain:** A stretch or tear of the muscle or tendon, the end of the muscle which connects it to a bone. It can be hard to tell the difference between a sprain, a strain and a break.

If you have any doubt, call your healthcare provider or go to the emergency room immediately for an x-ray.

Ask your healthcare provider about over-the-counter pain relievers such as acetaminophen (like Tylenol) or ibuprofen (like Motrin). Bruises, sprains and strains should be taken care of "The RICE Way:"

- **Rest:** Make sure your child rests the injured part of the body.
- **Ice:** Apply ice packs. Never apply heat in the first 24 hours after an injury. It will increase swelling.
- **Compression:** Wrap the injured part of the body in a compression bandage for at least two days.
- **Elevation:** Keep the injured part of the body elevated above heart level to reduce swelling.

## Fractures

A crack, break or shattering of the bone. Sometimes these are hard to tell from a simple strain or sprain. Indications that the bone is broken are: if you heard or felt a bone snap; if the injured part moves strangely or looks unnatural, or is very painful.

**Treatment:** Apply an ice pack, and seek immediate medical care. Do not move the athlete if you suspect she has injured her neck or back, or if a bone protrudes from the skin. Call for emergency care.

## For more information, visit:

American Medical Society for Sports Medicine  
[www.amssm.org](http://www.amssm.org)

American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine  
[www.sportsmed.org](http://www.sportsmed.org)



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