



Student Health Center

UNC Wilmington

INSTRUCTION SHEET: FOOT SPRAIN

Treatment: Crutches & Soft Wrap

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a sprain of your foot. A sprain is a stretching or tear in ligaments and tendons (rope-like bands holding bones and muscles in place).

Despite the fact that no break or dislocation of the bones was detected, a sprain is a significant injury, and should be treated, not ignored. Also, a hidden break could still be present, and proper treatment of a sprain treats a hidden hairline fracture, as well.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR SPRAIN:

- 1- Above all, put the foot to rest! Not only will rest make the foot hurt less, it will also help heal the foot more quickly. Use crutches. Do not bear weight. Stay off the foot altogether for at least two days. After two days, start gradual weight-bearing. If the foot hurts, back off from weight-bearing. If the foot is improving, gradually ease back into normal walking.
- 2- Elevating the foot is helpful to reduce swelling, especially in the first 48 hours after the injury. Keep the foot up on pillows, above the level of the heart. Let gravity work to reduce the swelling.
- 3- Apply cold to the foot off-and-on for the first 48 hours after injury. Cold helps decrease discomfort and swelling. Do not apply ice directly to the foot, causing discomfort. Rather, aim for coolness, yet comfort, applying a layer or two of towel between the cold pack and foot.
- 4- After 48 hours, apply heat in the form of warm soaks. Moist heat increases circulation in the tissues of the foot, which promotes healing.
- 5- If you are not showing progressive, steady improvement over three to four days, make a prompt appointment as directed. Sometimes breaks are difficult to see on X-rays: Repeat exam and X-rays may be necessary. If you see a personal/referral doctor, be sure to pick up your initial X-rays prior to your appointment
- 6- If you are having severe pain or an unusual problem, return to the Student Health Center or see your personal/referral doctor promptly.
- 7- Allow at least two weeks for the foot to heal before you attempt any sports (longer if the activity causes foot discomfort).