



# Student Health Center

## UNC Wilmington

### INSTRUCTION SHEET: CONTUSION (BRUISE) ELBOW

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a contusion (bruise) of your elbow. No fracture (break) or dislocation is seen.

Realize, however, that a hairline fracture is sometimes hard to see on X-rays; fortunately, if a small crack is present, the initial treatment is the same as for a bruise.

#### MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR ELBOW INJURY:

- 1- Rest your elbow; minimize use of the arm.
- 2- Elevate the elbow above the level of your heart.
- 3- Apply cold packs to the elbow off-and-on the first two days after the injury. Cold helps decrease pain and swelling.
- 4- After two days, apply heat in the form of warm soaks once or twice a day.
- 5- Over-the-counter pain medications can relieve discomfort associated with a bruised elbow. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
- 6- Keep your arm in the sling at least during waking hours (the sling can be worn during sleep, too, if the arm is more comfortable). The sling should be worn until there is no pain with full motion of the elbow.
- 7- As your elbow improves, begin gently working the joint several times a day. Bend and straighten the elbow as discomfort allows; do not force the motion to cause significant pain. Early movement of the elbow helps prevent stiffening of the joint.
- 8- If the elbow shows progressive improvement to a pain-free state within a week, no further treatment is necessary. If the pain does not go away, repeat examination is indicated. Return to the Student Health Center for further evaluation and treatment..