

Bone Fractures

A fracture is also called a broken bone. A broken bone is often caused by a fall, an injury or an accident. You may need an x-ray to see if you have a broken bone. After your bone(s) are put back in place, you may have a cast or splint to keep the injured bone(s) from moving. If you have a bad break and other injuries, you may need to have surgery and stay in the hospital. Most bones heal in 6 to 8 weeks.

Signs of a fracture

The area near the broken bone may:

- Hurt
- Feel weak
- Feel numb or tingle
- Be swollen or bruised
- Bleed if the skin is broken
- Look bent if the bones are out of place
- Be hard to move

Your care

- Keep the injured area raised above your heart as much as possible to reduce swelling. Use pillows to raise your injured hand or foot above the level of your heart.
- Use ice to lessen pain and swelling for the next 1 to 2 days. Put the bag of ice on the cast or splint over the injury for 15 to 20 minutes every hour.
- Take your medicines as directed.

If you have a cast

- Check the skin around the cast every day. Call your doctor if you have red or sore spots.
- Put lotion on dry areas.
- Do not use lotion or powders if you have blisters or stitches on your skin under the cast.
- Use a hair dryer daily, set on cool. This keeps your cast dry, comfortable and helps relieve itching.
- Call your doctor if your cast fits loosely. The cast can slide around causing skin irritation.
- Exercise your fingers or toes. This improves blood flow and helps healing.
- Use a nail file to file rough edges on your cast.
- **Do not** scratch the skin under your cast with sharp or pointed objects.
- **Do not** put pressure on any part of your cast or splint as it may break.

- Keep your cast or splint dry by putting a plastic bag over it when bathing.
- Use a hair dryer if your cast gets wet.
- Call your doctor or clinic to schedule an appointment to get your cast removed after the bone has healed.

Call your doctor right away if:

- You have trouble breathing, chest pain or confusion.
- You have pain that does not go away.
- Your skin or nails of the injured hand or foot are blue, gray, cold or numb.
- Your cast gets damaged or breaks.
- You have new stains or an odor coming from under the cast.
- You have swelling that makes your cast feel too tight.

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