

Dislocated Toe: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

Your toe can be forced out of its normal position (dislocated) if you jam it or bend it too far backward (hyperextend). Toe dislocations are common, especially during sports. You probably knew right away that something was wrong, because your toe hurt a lot, swelled, and looked crooked. The doctor put your toe back in its normal position. But you will still need to be careful, because it can more easily go out of position again.

Rest and home treatment can help you heal. Your doctor probably taped the injured toe to the one next to it or put a splint on your toe to keep it in position while it heals. He or she may recommend exercises to strengthen your toe. If you damaged bones or muscles, you may need more treatment.

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?

- If your doctor put a splint on your toe, wear the splint as directed. Do not remove it until your doctor says you can.
- If you have your toes taped together, make sure the tape is snug but not so tight that your toes get numb or tingle. You can loosen the tape if it is too tight. If you need to retape your toes, always put padding between the toes before putting on the new tape.
- Do not put weight on your foot unless your doctor tells you to. You may need crutches to walk.
- If your toe is swollen, put ice or a cold pack on it for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake) or until the swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- Prop up your foot on a pillow when you ice it or anytime you sit or lie down during the next 3 days. Try to keep it above the level of your heart. This will help reduce swelling.
- Rest your foot. You may need to change your activities to avoid movements that irritate the toe.
- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- If your doctor recommends that you do exercises, do them as directed.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have severe pain.
- Your toe is cool or pale or changes color.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in the toe.

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

- Pain and swelling get worse.
- You do not get better as expected.

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