

Bone, Muscle, and Joint Injury

Brief Version

You can take care of most muscle strain at home. You can even treat bruised muscles at home. If your child gets a bruise on a joint (the knee, hip, or elbow), most of the time it is not serious.

Broken bones need care by a doctor. Twisting injuries of the ligaments between the muscles (called sprains) also need a doctor's care.

How can I care for my child's pulled or sore muscles?

Here are ways you can help:

- Put an ice bag or cold pack on the sore muscles for 20 minutes. Repeat this 3 to 4 times the first day.
- Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for at least 2 days.
- If the muscle is still stiff after 48 hours, have your child soak in a hot bath for 20 minutes. If the pain is in one certain area, use a heating pad or hot, wet washcloth. Apply heat for 10 minutes, three times a day until the pain goes away.
- Have your child do stretching exercises. Have your child get back to exercise a little at a time.

How can I care for my child's bruised muscle or bone?

- Put an ice bag or cold pack on the area for 20 minutes. Repeat this 3 to 4 times the first day. After 48 hours, apply heat with a heating pad or hot, wet washcloths for 10 minutes, three times a day.
- Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil).
- Make sure your child rests as much as he or she can for the first 2 days.

Call your child's doctor during office hours if:

- The pain is not getting better by the third day.
- The pain is not gone by 2 weeks.
- You have other concerns or questions.

Written by B.D. Schmitt, M.D., author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Books.

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.