Please call 911 if you think you have a medical emergency.

Knee Injury Treatment

Self-Care at Home

Home care for knee injuries is similar for both a sprain and a fracture. If you suspect a fracture, however, seek immediate care from your doctor or emergency department. Home care, which you can do until medical care arrives, includes the following:

- Rest: Stay off the injured knee so you do not injure it further. Certain damage could require you to have a knee joint replacement.
- Elevate: Keep the injured knee elevated to decrease swelling and knee pain.
- Ice compresses: Apply ice packs for 15-20 minutes at a time, 4 times a day, to keep swelling and pain down. Do not put ice directly on your skin. Wrap the ice pack in a towel.
- Pain relief
  - Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn) is ideal for knee injuries because they reduce both pain and inflammation. Follow the directions on the label or your doctor's instructions.
  - You also can use acetaminophen (Tylenol) if you cannot tolerate the others.

Medical Treatment

- Doctors will splint any broken bones seen on the X-rays.
  - You may be sent to an orthopedic surgeon for evaluation.
  - Depending on the severity of the break, you may need surgery to keep your knee's structures in line.
- More common, however, the x-rays don't show a fracture. Then the concern will be injury to either your ligaments or knee cartilage.
  - If your knee is too swollen or painful, your doctor may not be able to obtain a good examination.
  - Your knee will be placed in an immobilizer and you will be given a follow-up appointment, either with your doctor or an orthopedic doctor.
Depending upon a number of factors, your doctor may want to “tap” the knee (place a needle through the skin into the joint space) to remove fluid. This may help in arriving at a diagnosis and may make you feel better.

Once the swelling and pain have improved, doctors can test the ligaments and cartilage for sprains or tears.

- Depending on the degree of sprain or tear your doctor suspects, you will be referred to physical therapy for rehabilitation or to an orthopedic surgeon for possible surgery.
- If your sprain is minor, you may just need to rest the knee and go without rehabilitation.

Depending on how much pain you have, your doctor may give you prescription strength pain medication. Often anti-inflammatory pain medications, such as ibuprofen or naproxen, are used to decrease swelling and control pain.

- Use these only as needed.
- Do not drive or operate heavy machinery while you are using prescription strength medications such as narcotics.

For more information, read the complete article, Knee Injury on http://www.emedicinehealth.com.

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