Broken Leg Treatment

Self-Care at Home

If an injury happens and you suspect a break, remember the following:

- Immobilize the leg as much as possible until help arrives.
- Rest. Try to keep from aggravating the injury.
- Apply an ice pack wrapped in a pillowcase or towel to decrease swelling.
- If possible, keep the leg elevated with pillows or cushions to decrease swelling.
- Often with a broken leg, an operation is necessary. For this reason, do not let someone with a broken leg eat or drink anything until seen by the doctor. Always ask the doctor if it would be OK to eat before doing so.

Medical Treatment

The type and location of a break in a leg bone will determine what treatment is needed.

- If the bones have become displaced or out of alignment, they will need to be realigned. This procedure is called "reduction." In order to do this, you will be given medications for pain prior to the procedure.

- An emergency doctor will be able to treat many types of fractures with a temporary plaster splint and will instruct you to follow up with an orthopedic doctor (bone specialist). However, fractures of the thighbone or the shinbone typically will require care from an orthopaedic surgeon immediately. This may mean a cast or even an operation.

- Bones are immobilized for healing by several methods.
  - A plaster splint or cast is often used.
When an operation is needed, pins, screws, and metal plates or wires may be used to hold the broken ends of a bone together.

For fractures in the middle part of the thighbone (femur) or the shinbone (tibia), a metal rod sometimes is placed down through the center of the bone. This is done in the operating room.

Your doctor will also provide you with medicine for the pain.


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