



**University of North Carolina Wilmington
Abrons Student Health Center**

INSTRUCTION SHEET: BROKEN TOE

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a fracture (break) in one of the small bones in your toe.

The main problem with a broken toe is pain: The toe hurts! Walking and standing on the foot increase pain (but otherwise do not harm you or your toe). The pain is most intense the first few days to week after the injury. After the first week, pain decreases and is more easily tolerated. The pain lessens each week, and is most often gone within a month.

Aside from the pain, expect mild discoloration (bruising) and swelling of the toe.

Fortunately, a broken toe is not a serious problem. The fracture almost always heals quite nicely.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR BROKEN TOE:

1. Minimize walking the first few days. Stay off the foot as possible. Elevate the foot. Apply cold packs off-and-on. These simple measures safely and adequately control the pain of a broken toe.
2. Over-the-counter pain medications can relieve discomfort associated with a broken toe. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
3. The provider may prescribe a stronger pain medication. Take this medication only if needed. The simple measures above may obviate the need for prescription medication. If required initially, prescription medication will likely be unnecessary after the first few days post-injury. The prescription medication can cause drowsiness, so perform no dangerous tasks, such as driving or operating machinery, while taking the medication.
4. Keep the toe taped to adjacent toes. Taping the affected toe splints the toe. Splinting minimizes movement of the broken bone: Pain is lessened; healing is promoted.
5. Initially, when limiting walking, a loose-fitting slipper is more comfortable. After a few days, when you begin walking more, a shoe with a firm sole may work better. A firm sole supports the toe and minimizes movement of the bones (decreasing pain and promoting healing).
6. Avoid tight-fitting or high-heeled shoes. Such shoes pinch the toe, increasing pain.
7. Do not participate in sports until you can do so without pain. Generally, a broken toe takes three to four weeks to heal.
8. If you have an unusual amount or length of pain, return to the Student Health Center or make a follow-up appointment with your personal/referral doctor.