



University of North Carolina Wilmington
Abrons Student Health Center

INSTRUCTION SHEET: FOOT INJURY Treatment: Crutches & Soft Wrap

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a foot injury. The injury is more likely a sprain, but might be a mild fracture. A sprain is a stretching or tear in the ligaments and tendons (rope-like bands holding bones and muscles in place) of a joint. A fracture is a broken bone. No *severe* fracture or dislocation is apparent.

Your injury should be treated carefully. Proper initial treatment of a significant sprain also treats a hidden fracture. Your provider and you will decide whether to send you for an X-ray now, or have you come back for a recheck in a several days. In the meantime, avoid bearing weight on the foot: Use your crutches to get around.

Also, X-ray or not, realize that if your symptoms persist, repeat evaluation is necessary.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR FOOT INJURY:

1. Above all, put the foot to rest! Resting the foot not only decreases pain, it also helps heal the foot more quickly. Use crutches. Do not walk or stand on the injured foot for at least three days. After three days, start *gradual* weight-bearing. If the foot hurts, back off from bearing weight. If the foot is improving, gradually ease back into normal walking.
2. A soft wrap helps support the foot and minimize swelling. If the wrap feels too tight, loosen it.
3. Elevating the foot is helpful to reduce swelling, especially in the initial two to three days after injury. Keep the foot up on pillows, above the level of the heart, whenever you can.
4. Apply cold to the foot off-and-on for the first 48 hours after injury. Cold helps decrease discomfort and swelling. Do not apply ice directly to the foot, causing discomfort. Rather, aim for coolness, yet comfort, applying a layer or two of cloth between the cold pack and foot.
5. Over-the-counter pain medications can relieve discomfort associated with an injured foot. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
6. After two to three days, apply heat in the form of warm soaks. Moist heat increases circulation in the foot tissues, promoting healing.
7. If you are sent for an X-ray, a report on the X-ray should be called to you within 24 hours from the time you are X-rayed. If you have not heard from your provider within 24 hours, return to the Student Health Center as soon as possible to get the report, or call your provider.
8. If you are having severe pain or an unusual problem, return to the Student Health Center or see your personal/referral doctor promptly. Even if your X-ray is “negative” for a fracture, if you continue to have pain or concerns about your foot, return to Student Health for a recheck. Sometimes fractures are hard to see on initial X-rays; repeat exam and X-rays may be necessary.
9. Allow at least two weeks for the foot to heal before attempting any sports (longer if the activity causes foot discomfort). Don’t participate in sports until you are *fully* recovered.