

Broken Toe: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

You have broken (fractured) a bone in your toe. This kind of fracture does not need a special cast or brace. "Buddy-taping" your broken toe to a healthy toe next to it is almost always enough to treat the problem and ease symptoms. The toe may take 4 weeks or more to heal.

You heal best when you take good care of yourself. Eat a variety of healthy foods, and don't smoke.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Be safe with medicines. Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- If your toe is taped to the toe next to it, your doctor has shown you how to change the tape. Protect the skin by putting something soft, such as felt or foam, between your toes before you tape them together. Never tape the toes together skin-to-skin. Your broken toe may need to be buddy-taped for 2 to 4 weeks to heal.
- Rest and protect your toe. Do not walk on it until you can do so without too much pain. If the doctor has told you to use crutches, use them as instructed.
- Put ice or a cold pack on your toe for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake) or until the swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- Prop up your foot on a pillow when you ice it or anytime you sit or lie down. Try to keep it above the level of your heart. This will help reduce swelling.
- Make sure you go to your follow-up appointments. Your doctor will need to check that your toe is healing right.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have severe pain.
- Your toe is cool or pale or changes color.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your toe.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Pain and swelling get worse.
- You are not getting better as expected.

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