ANKLE FRACTURE IN CHILDREN

GENERAL INFORMATION:

What is it? An ankle fracture (frak-shur) is a break in one or more of the bones in your child's ankle. It may also be called a broken ankle. The tibia and fibula are the two bones in the lower leg. The talus bone is the square flat bone at the top of the foot. How long it will take your child's ankle to heal is different for every child. It may take 4-6 weeks. But, children's bodies grow and change every day, so fractures usually heal faster than in adults. An X-ray will show when the broken bone is healed.

Causes: Your child can break his ankle by twisting and turning it the wrong way. Broken ankles most often occur because of a fall, car accident, or while playing sports. Fractures in children younger than 1 year of age are uncommon because their bones are very flexible and "rubbery." Fractures in these children may be caused by problems with how a bone was formed, tumors, or physical abuse.

Signs and Symptoms: Your child may have pain, swelling, or bruising in the injured ankle. Because of the break, your child's ankle bones may look out of place. The bones may be poking through the skin and bleeding. Your child may limp to lessen the pain. He may have trouble moving his ankle or foot, and it may feel weak, numb, and tingly. Your child may not be able to move or put any weight on his foot.

Care:

- Your child may need an X-ray of his ankle. A cast or splint may be put on your child's ankle, foot, and lower leg to keep the bones from moving. Your child may need surgery if he has a bad fracture. Caregivers pay close attention to fractures near physes (fi-sees) or growth plates. Ask your caregiver if your child's fracture may affect his bone growth. Caregivers also will watch for compartment syndrome. Compartment syndrome is pain, swelling, weakness, and decreased blood flow in the muscles of the legs and arms.

- Acetaminophen (uh-c-tuh-min-o-fin) or ibuprofen (i-bew-pro-fin) may help your child's pain. Caregivers may give your child stronger medicine if he has a lot of pain. Your child may need antibiotic (an-ti-bi-ah-tik) medicine or a tetanus shot if he has a break in his skin. Caregivers also may want you to use ice packs on your child's fracture to lessen the swelling. Ask caregivers how to safely use an ice pack. An X-ray can show when the broken bone is healed.

CARE AGREEMENT:

You have the right to help plan your child's care. To help with this plan, you must learn about your child's injury and how it can be treated. You then can discuss treatment options with your child's caregivers. Work with them to decide what care will be used to treat your child.

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