

Simple (undisplaced) toe fractures in children

Information for children, families and carers

We have given you this factsheet because your child has sustained a simple (undisplaced) toe fracture. It explains what a toe fracture is and how it is treated. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is a toe fracture?

A toe fracture is a break in one of the small bones in the toe.

A simple or undisplaced toe fracture means that the bone is broken but still in its normal position.

What causes this type of injury?

A toe fracture is a common injury in children. It is usually caused dropping a heavy object on the toe or stubbing the toe hard.

How is this type of injury diagnosed?

An x-ray (a quick and painless procedure commonly used to produce images of the inside of the body) has confirmed your child's injury.

How is this type of injury treated?

A toe fracture usually heals well on its own without treatment in three to four weeks.

Walker boot or toe strapping

We may:

- give your child a walker boot (a type of medical shoe used to protect and support the foot after an injury) to wear when walking.
- strap up your child's fractured toe (we will put a small piece of cotton wool or gauze between your child's injured toe and the toe next to it, then tape them together to support the injured toe).
- advise your child to wear a supportive shoe.

Your child should gradually stop wearing the walker boot or remove the toe strapping two to three weeks after their injury.

Rest, ice and elevation

Your child may experience some swelling for a few weeks after their injury. To help reduce swelling, your child should rest and elevate (raise above their heart level) their injured toe and apply ice (an ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) for 10 minutes, three times a day for the first few days (especially at the end of the day).

Pain relief medication

Your child may experience some pain, tenderness and bruising for a few weeks after their injury. Taking pain relief medications, such as paracetamol (Calpol®) and ibuprofen, for the first few days after the injury will help to ease their discomfort. Always check the label before giving your child any over-the-counter medications.

Are there any complications?

It is uncommon for children to experience any complications with a toe fracture.

When can my child resume their normal daily activities?

Your child should try to walk on their injured foot as much as they comfortably can while their toe heals.

Your child can go back to nursery or school as soon as they feel comfortable and happy to do so.

Your child should not participate in any sporting activities, physical education (PE) or high impact activities, such as trampolining, for six weeks after their injury.

Will my child need any follow-up care?

Most children do not usually need to have any follow-up care for this type of injury.

When should I seek medical help?

Contact us if your child is struggling to:

- weight bear (put all their weight on their injured foot) four weeks after their injury.
- go back to their normal daily activities and sports eight weeks after their injury.

Your child's toe strapping may be too tight if they have:

- severe toe pain
- a white or blue coloured toe
- a numb sensation or pins and needles in their toe
- difficulty moving their toes

If any of these signs occur, follow the steps below:

1. Loosen the strapping around your child's toe.
2. Rest and elevate your child's foot for 30 minutes.

3. If symptoms persist after following the steps above, take your child immediately back to the emergency department.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Children's outpatient department

Telephone: **023 8120 4477** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm)

Email: paedorthopaedics@uhs.nhs.uk

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/broken-toe

www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/x-ray

www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/patient-information-leaflets

www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk

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