

Foot injuries should be taken seriously

Question: My son recently stubbed his toes into the dining room table. I didn't know whether he broke his toes or how to treat him. What would you recommend?

Answer: Home injuries with the feet should always be taken seriously. The criteria to determine if emergency treatment is needed includes; extreme distortion of the joint from its normal position, excessive swelling, discoloration, pain and/or referred pain. You may still have a fracture without these symptoms or only a few of them. As a parent, your biggest concern is that a growth plate hasn't been damaged. Growth plates at the end of bones are where the bone develops with its nutritional supply. A distortion in the endplate could produce improper development as your child grows, and permanent changes.

In a trauma with any joint, ice should be administered immediately along with visual inspection. The degree of pain is usually an accurate measurement of the degree of the injury. If there is any doubt that there may be a fracture, diagnostic X-rays should be taken to determine their presence. If a fracture is ruled out then the condition is commonly an injury to the supporting ligaments, and muscles around the feet, toes and ankle. This is considered a sprain/strain trauma and many times can involve more radical symptoms than a fracture. It should be immobilized and rested initially. Restoring motion back to the joint as soon as possible after the acute phase of healing is essential to minimize scar formation which may lead to future adhesions that restrict motion.

Adjustments of extremities after a trauma, such as a jammed toe or other digit, can restore motion and enhance the healing process.

Quote of the week: *“The price of greatness is responsibility.”* – Winston Churchill