



A Parent's Guide to At-Home Treatment for Finger, Hand, Wrist or Elbow Injuries

Whether it's a fall on an outstretched arm at the playground or a jammed finger at a basketball game, chances are your child will experience an injury at some point in their lives. We share tips on how to treat these frequent injuries at-home and when to seek professional care.

As a parent, you want your child to live a fun and active lifestyle, and most importantly enjoy being a kid. However, part of being an active kid also means a chance of injury. It doesn't matter if it's a slip and fall at recess or during a sporting event, finger, hand, wrist or elbow injuries are common.

If your child has an open wound, a concussion, a burn, an animal bite or they are bleeding, go to an emergency room right away. OrthoIndy trauma physicians are located at the **Trauma Center at St.Vincent Indianapolis**, and there is a team of experts on call 24/7 to handle orthopedic traumas.

When these injuries occur, it can be difficult to determine what to do next in order to help your child return to their normal, playful selves. It's important to act fast and treat your child's injury before the pain gets worse.

"Assessing and treating a child's injury is important to the healing process in growing children," said Dr. Robert Falender an OrthoIndy hand, wrist and elbow specialist. "Many injuries can be treated with rest, ice, compression and elevation, but some injuries might need more care or professional treatment."



Immediate Care for Hand, Wrist or Elbow Injuries

In general, if your child is not in extreme pain and can still move the injured body part, the R.I.C.E. method is a good start for initial treatment of an injury. Another good indicator is whether or not a child is able to sleep. If they are sleeping well, they probably aren't in extreme pain and don't need professional treatment.

R.I.C.E.

- **Rest:** Modify activities according to pain or minimize use
- **Ice:** Ice your child's injured body part intermittently during the first 24 to 48 hours by using a thin towel and applying ice for 20 minutes every two hours; never put ice directly on the skin
- **Compression:** Bandages or wraps can be used to reduce your child's swelling and restrict movement; great care should be taken to not apply a wrap too tightly
- **Elevation:** Raise your child's injured limb to an elevated and resting position above their heart

"If your child is old enough, over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol or ibuprofen are also helpful in reducing swelling and relieving pain from a hand, wrist or elbow injury," said Dr. Falender. "Follow age restrictions and doses on the bottle."

There can often be a fracture even when the child can move the affected area. If your child is not tolerating the home care, it is always best to get an X-ray to make sure.

If they aren't much better the next day, bring them into one of our urgent care clinics or make an appointment with a specialist.



Visit **OrthoIndy Urgent Care** located throughout Indianapolis with weekend and evening hours or make an appointment with an **OrthoIndy hand, wrist and elbow specialist**.

At-home Treatment for Hand or Finger Injuries

Many hand or finger injuries are not severe and do not need medical treatment. For example, if your child's fingertip receives full impact from a baseball, basketball or volleyball, it might cause a sprain to the joint or knuckle of the finger.

This is referred to as a jammed finger and is a common sports injury that can be treated at home with R.I.C.E., over-the-counter pain medications, buddy tape or finger splints.

Buddy Tape

- Tape the injured finger to an adjacent finger using self-adhesive wrap
- Apply two pieces of tape to the sprained finger — one just above the injured joint and one just below the injury
- For example: Injured middle finger should be taped to the index finger
- Do not wrap the fingers too tightly
- Remove the buddy tape once the finger has fully healed, usually after two to four weeks

Finger Splints

- Finger splints can be purchased at a drugstore and applied as directed on the product
- The injured finger should be splinted in a slightly flexed, or downward curving, position
- The splint should be left on for five to seven days
- Once splint is removed, buddy tape might be necessary during certain activities to prevent re-injury



When to Seek Immediate Medical Care for Hand or Finger Injuries

"If your child's finger is broken you should seek medical attention," said Dr. Falender. "Children require care from a professional because damage to the growth plate of a finger bone can lead to long term deformity."

Signs Your Child's Finger May be Broken

- Your child's finger is hot or inflamed
- Your child has developed a fever
- Your child's finger appears deformed
- Your child cannot straighten their finger
- Swelling and pain becomes significant or persists after 48 hours
- Your child says their finger feels numb
- Your child's finger has turned white, pale or less pink

At-home Treatment for Wrist Injuries

While wrist injuries can be extremely painful and take your child to the sidelines for awhile, some are not severe and can be treated with R.I.C.E., over-the-counter pain relievers and splinting or bracing.



Wrist Brace or Splint

- Use to keep your child's wrist immobile and protected
- Can be purchased at a drugstore and applied as directed on the product
- Should only be used for a few days and no more than one week

When to Seek Immediate Medical Care for a Wrist Injury

- Your child's wrist is deformed
- Your child has developed a fever
- Your child has severe and uncontrollable pain
- Your child cannot move their wrist
- Your child says their wrist feels numb
- Pain and swelling continues to get worse after 24 hours

“ If your child's wrist injury does not improve quickly, even with just mild pain, it is important to have their injury evaluated. Proper diagnosis and treatment are vital to avoid long term problems such as chronic pain, stiffness and even arthritis.

- Dr. Robert Falender



At-home Treatment for Elbow Injuries

A fall on an outstretched arm, especially as a child, can cause an injury to the elbow which results in pain, swelling and sometimes bruising. If an elbow injury is not severe, R.I.C.E., over-the-counter pain medication and a splint or sling can ease elbow pain and promote healing.

Elbow Brace or Sling

- Used to keep your child's elbow immobile and protected
- Can be purchased at a drugstore and applied as directed on the product
- Should only be used for a few days and no more than one week without the recommendation of a doctor

When to Seek Immediate Medical Care for an Elbow Injury

- Your child's pain continues to get worse after 24 hours
- Your child's elbow continues to swell in the elbow or hand
- Your child cannot bend their arm
- Your child has a fever
- Your child feels tingling, weakness or numbness in the elbow, hand or fingers
- Your child's elbow looks red or feels inflamed

Most elbow sprains will heal with some treatment at home. However, if pain is persistent, it could be a more severe elbow injury and professional treatment may be necessary. In these situations, it's important to seek treatment right away so the injury is treated correctly and surgery can hopefully be avoided.



With years of experience and the most advanced technology, OrthoIndy hand, wrist and elbow specialists will give your child the best chance possible to achieve their goals. **Make an appointment** or visit one of our urgent care clinics and let OrthoIndy's team of experts help you get normal back, whatever your normal looks like.



To help you better understand what your child's pain means, what might be causing it and how you can prevent future injuries view our ***Ultimate Guide to Hand, Wrist and Elbow Injuries.***

