



First aid fact sheet

Fracture / dislocation



- It can be difficult to tell whether an injury is a fracture, dislocation, sprain or strain. If in doubt, always treat as a fracture.
- DO NOT try to force a broken or dislocated bone back into place.

Signs and symptoms

Fracture

- pain or tenderness at or near the site of the injury
- swelling
- deformity
- discolouration, redness, bruising
- loss of function
- the patient felt or heard the break occur
- a coarse grating sound is heard or felt as bones rub together

Dislocation

- pain at or near the site of the injury
- difficulty or inability to move the joint
- abnormal mobility of the limb
- loss of power
- deformity (such as an abnormal lump or depression)
- tenderness
- swelling
- discolouration and bruising

What to do

Fracture

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Ask the patient to remain as still as possible.
- 3 Control any bleeding, cover any wounds and check for other fractures.
- 4 Immobilise the broken bone by placing a padded splint along the injured limb.
- 5 Secure the splint by passing the bandages above and below the break to prevent movement. Tie the bandages firmly and away from the injured side.
- 6 For a leg fracture, also immobilise the foot and ankle. Support the limb while bandaging.
- 7 Check that the bandages are not too tight and watch for signs of loss of circulation to the limb every 15 minutes.
- 8 Seek medical aid.

Dislocation

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Rest and support the limb using soft padding and bandages.
 - For a **shoulder injury**, support the arm as comfortably as possible.
 - For a **wrist injury**, support the wrist in a sling.
- 3 Apply a cold pack directly over the injured joint, if possible.
- 4 Seek medical aid.
- 5 Check circulation of the limb. If circulation is absent, call **Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance. Massage the limb gently to try to restore circulation.

In a medical emergency call Triple Zero (000)

DRSABCD Danger ► Response ► Send for help ► Airway ► Breathing ► CPR ► Defibrillation

You could save a life with first aid training • www.stjohn.org.au • **1300 360 455**

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