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| **First Aid: Strains and Sprains**  Strains are injuries to muscle due to overstretching, while sprains involve a stretch or a partial tear of ligaments (which connect two bones) or tendons (which connect muscle to bone). Sprains and strains happen more often in teens than in younger children.  **Signs and Symptoms**   * pain in the joint or muscle * swelling and bruising * warmth and redness of the injured area * difficulty moving the injured part   **What to Do**   * Make sure your child stops activity right away. * Think **R.I.C.E.** for the first 48 hours after the injury:   + ***R***est: Rest the injured part until it's less painful.   + ***I***ce: Wrap an icepack or cold compress in a towel and place over the injured part immediately. Continue for no more than 20 minutes at a time, four to eight times a day.   + ***C***ompression: Support the injured part with an elastic compression bandage for at least 2 days.   + ***E***levation: Raise the injured part above heart level to decrease swelling. * Give your child ibuprofen or acetaminophen for pain and to reduce swelling.   **Seek Emergency Medical Care**  **If Your Child Has:**   * severe pain when the injured part is touched or moved * continued trouble bearing weight * increased bruising * numbness or a feeling of "pins and needles" in the injured area * a limb that looks "bent" or misshapen * signs of infection (increased warmth, redness, streaks, swelling, and pain) * a strain or sprain that doesn't seem to be improving after 5 to 7 days   **Think Prevention!**  Teach kids to warm up properly and to stretch before and after exercising or participating in any sport, and make sure they **always wear appropriate protective equipment**.  Reviewed by: Steven Dowshen, MD Date reviewed: April 2014 |
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