**Muscle, Bone or Joint Injury**

### Description/Introduction

There are four main types of muscle, bone and joint injuries. A fracture is a full break, chip or crack in a bone. It’s called an open fracture when there is an open wound at, or bone piercing through, the injury site. A dislocation is when a bone moves out of its normal position at a joint. Sprains happen when the ligament, which is a band of tissue that connects bones, tears at a joint. Strains are when muscles or tendons, which are bands of tissue that connect muscles to bones, stretch and tear.

### What to Look For

Signals of a serious injury include:

- Pain or discomfort.
- Bones or joints clearly out of normal shape.
- Bruising or swelling.
- Child or infant cannot use hurt part of the body normally.
- Pieces of bone sticking out of a wound.
- Child feels bones grating, or felt or heard a snap or pop at time of injury.
- Hurt area is cold, numb and tingly.
- What happened makes you think the injury may be severe.

### Care

- In general, follow RICE:
  - **Rest:** Do not move or straighten the injured area.
  - **Immobilize:** Keep the injured area in the position it was found.
  - **Cold:** Cold reduces internal bleeding, pain and swelling. Fill a plastic bag with ice and water, or wrap ice with a damp cloth, and apply cold to the injured area. Always place a thin barrier between the cold element and the skin. Apply the cold compress for 20 minutes.
  - **Elevate:** Elevating the injured part may help reduce swelling. Do not elevate the injured part if it causes more pain.

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Call 9-1-1 in the following situations:

- Injury involves the head, neck or spine
- Obvious deformity
- Moderate or severe swelling and discoloration
- Bones sound or feel like they are rubbing together
- Snap or pop was heard or felt at time of injury
- Open fracture
- Cannot move or use the hurt part normally
- Area is cold and numb
- Trouble breathing
- Cause of the injury suggests that injury may be severe

If you suspect a child or infant has a head, neck or back injury, do not move the child or infant unless it is absolutely necessary in order to open the airway.

Remember to always notify the parents and discuss any care provided.