

Arm Pain - Symptom

Definition

- Pain in the arm (shoulder to fingers)
- Includes shoulder, elbow, wrist and finger joints
- Includes minor muscle strains from hard work or sports (overuse)
- Pain is not caused by an injury

Health Information

Causes

- **Muscle Overuse (Strained Muscles).** Arm pains are often from hard muscle work or sports. Examples are too much throwing or swimming. They are most common in the shoulder. This type of pain can last from hours up to 7 days.
- **Muscle Cramps.** Brief pains that last 1 to 15 minutes are often due to muscle cramps. These occur in the hand after too much writing or typing.
- **Viral Illness.** Mild muscle aches in both arms also occur with many viral illnesses.
- **Serious Causes.** Broken bones (fractures) or joint infections (arthritis).

Pain Scale

- **Mild:** Your child feels pain and tells you about it. But, the pain does not keep your child from any normal activities. School, play and sleep are not changed.
- **Moderate:** The pain keeps your child from doing some normal activities. It may wake him or her up from sleep.
- **Severe:** The pain is very bad. It keeps your child from doing all normal activities.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Strained muscles are a common cause of unexplained arm pains.
- Examples are throwing a ball over and over again or weight lifting.
- Weekend warriors who are out of shape get the most muscle pains.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Pain Medicine:

- To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.

3. Cold Pack:

- For pain or swelling, use a cold pack. You can also use ice wrapped in a wet cloth.
- Put it on the sore muscles for 20 minutes.
- Repeat 4 times on the first day, then as needed.
- Caution: Avoid frostbite.

4. Heat Pack:

- If pain lasts over 2 days, put heat on the sore muscle.
- Use a heat pack, heating pad or warm wet washcloth.
- Do this for 10 minutes, then as needed.
- Caution: Avoid burns.

5. **What to Expect:**

- A strained muscle hurts for 2 or 3 days.
- The pain often peaks on day 2.
- After severe overuse, the pain may last a week.

Call Your Doctor If

- Fever or swollen joint occurs
- Pain caused by work or sports lasts over 7 days
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Pain gets worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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