



## Broken Bones 101

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So, your kid has a broken arm. Maybe. You're not quite sure. It seems to hurt a lot, but you can't really tell if it's swollen.

What do you do? And where do you go for help?

Emergency room? Pediatrician? Orthopedist?

**BocaParent** checked with a couple of local experts for some guidance.

(Of course, if an arm, leg, or any other bone is obviously broken, get to the nearest emergency room or call 911 for a severe injury.)

In other cases, it can be trickier.

Margaret Neddo, emergency department director at West Boca Medical Center, said children can often sustain more pain than adults, and their bones aren't as hard as ours. So a bone break may not be as obvious.

The child may be able to move it at first and may not have swelling initially. It might get worse the next day.

It's always best to get it checked out, said Neddo, a mom of three. "For me, it is about peace of mind."

West Boca Medical Center has a pediatric emergency department, which sees about 30 kids a day, and has the area's only pediatric orthopedist, Dr. Kenneth Jeffers.

How a broken bone is treated in the West Boca ER depends on the nature of the break. For a simple case, a child can get X-rayed, get a cast and you can be on your way. For a more serious break, the orthopedist will need to weigh in. Doctors are particularly concerned about breaks near a growth plate in the arm, knee or ankle – and that's why it's good to see a pediatric orthopedist, if possible, Neddo said.

If the injury is severe or requires surgery, the child will be admitted to the hospital. If he has a lot of swelling, it may only be splinted in the ER. Then you'll need to see an orthopedist a day or two later for a cast.

West Boca also has a new call-ahead service for non-life-threatening injuries that allow you to reserve a time to come in and cut out some of the ER wait time.

Boca Raton Regional Hospital in East Boca doesn't have a pediatric department, but they do treat children in the emergency room. They don't, however, do casts.

If you go in with a suspected break, they will do the X-ray, splint it and refer you to an orthopedist.

For minor injuries, or if you're just not sure what to do, you may start with your pediatrician. If he feels an X-ray is in order, he may send you to the ER or, during regular hours, a walk-in X-ray facility. Once a break is confirmed, you still may end up in the ER, or be sent to an orthopedist. If you cannot get in to see Jeffers, you will likely be referred to other practices in Broward.

No one we spoke to could say why there is only one pediatric orthopedist around Boca Raton. The number of bright pink and blue casts spotted around the school grounds this year – and the overflowing waiting rooms at the offices in Broward – indicate a demand for that specialty.

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