

PAEDIATRIC NURSING PRACTICE MANUAL
SECTION 13

CARE OF THE CHILD WITH AN ORTHOPAEDIC CONDITION

13.2 PRINCIPLES OF FRACTURE CARE

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Aims

1. Preserve neurovascular status

Fractures may result in damage to blood vessels and nerves. Observe hourly:

- colour
- warmth
- swelling
- sensation (numbness, pain, pins and needles)
- movement
- peripheral pulses
- capillary return

Report any marked change immediately.

Refer also to [PNPM 13.1](#) Neurovascular Observations.

2. Prevent further damage or deterioration

Support and immobilisation of affected part

- splint
- collar and cuff
- traction
- plaster of Paris

Elevate affected limb to minimise swelling

- elevate the foot of the bed
- arm-pillow or stop sign sling
- leg elevation pillow (James pillow) or anti-rotation box

Pressure area care to preserve skin integrity.

3. Maintain function

Range of motion exercises to all unaffected extremities

4. Provide adequate pain control

- Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) or narcotic infusion
- Continuous or intermittent nerve blocks
- Other analgesia (eg. Morphine protocol, oral analgesics)

Note: Muscle spasm may cause pain for which a muscle relaxant may be used in conjunction with analgesia.