

Elastic Bandage: How to Use

What is an elastic bandage?

An elastic bandage is a stretchy rolled bandage designed to wrap around an injured body part. They come in several widths, ranging from 2 inches to 6 inches. Many people call them "Ace bandages," named after the most common brand.

What are elastic bandages used for?

An elastic bandage provides compression to an injured body part. This helps control swelling and ease pain. A bandage is a good reminder that you have an injury and should not overdo it. The bandage is not sturdy enough to provide a lot of support, so it is possible to re-injure yourself while playing a sport or exercising with an elastic bandage on. You may need a special brace to use during activities or sports.

Elastic bandages work well to hold ice bags on an injury. Put a couple of loops of the bandage around the injury first, then place the ice bag over the bandage, then roll the remainder of the bandage around the bag to keep it snugly against your body.

Health care providers may also use elastic bandages to attach special splints to your injury.

How do I put on an elastic bandage?

When you put on an elastic bandage start below the injury and continue to wrap back up around the injured area. For example, for a knee injury you would start beneath the knee and then wrap the bandage around and above the knee. This helps control swelling better. The bandage should be wrapped firmly. Be sure not to put the bandage on too tight as this may cause swelling on the body part away from the bandage. For example, if you have an elastic bandage too tight on your ankle your feet and toes may swell, feel cold, or turn bluish. If this happens be sure to loosen the bandage.

You should continue to use the elastic bandage until the pain and swelling of your injury has gone away.