

HOW TO PUT ON A BANDAGE

You can use a bandage to hold a dressing in place, to control bleeding, to support a limb and stop it moving, and to raise an injured limb to reduce swelling.

There are two main types of bandage:

- Roller bandages: use these to hold dressings in place and to support injured limbs, particularly for ankles, knees, wrists or elbows.
- Triangular bandages: use these as large dressings, as slings to support a wrist, arm or shoulder injury, or folded as a broad-fold bandage to stop a limb from moving.

If you cannot find a bandage, then you can always improvise by using a piece of clothing or material. For example you could fold a headscarf diagonally in half to make a triangular bandage for a sling.

How to put on a bandage:

If someone has hurt themselves and you need to apply a bandage, below are the key things to remember.

- Reassure them and explain what you are going to do before you start.
- Make them comfortable by helping them sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Support the injury by holding the limb carefully, or ask them or someone else to help.
- Start bandaging from the front and from the side of the body or limb that is injured.
- Apply bandages firmly but not so tightly that it restricts their circulation.
- Generally, wrap the bandage using spiral turns working from the inside to the outside of the limb.
- For joint injuries, make diagonal turns in a figure-of-eight above and below the joint. See below for specific techniques.
- To immobilise a limb, make a broad-fold bandage: lay a triangular bandage flat on a clean surface, fold it in half horizontally so the point touches the base and then fold it in half again.
- Leave fingers and toes peeking out, if possible, so you can press them to check circulation afterwards.
- Use pins or tape to fasten roller bandages, otherwise tuck the bandage in as securely as you can.
- Use reef knots to tie triangular bandages: right over left and under, then left over right and under.
- Check their circulation: Once you have finished, check for circulation by pressing one of their finger or toe nails for five seconds until it goes pale. If the colour does not come back within two seconds, the bandage is too tight so you will need to loosen and do it again. Check their circulation every ten minutes.

Specific bandage techniques for joints:

The most common types of injury are in the joints which can seem a bit tricky but are easy if you know how, so make sure you know these three main techniques:

- How to bandage a [hand or wrist injury](#).
- How to bandage an [ankle, knee or elbow injury](#).
- How to [make a sling](#).

How to bandage a hand

You can bandage a hand to hold a dressing in place, or to support a sprained or strained wrist. If the bandage is to provide support, you need to wrap it either side of the injury too, to give enough support for the whole area.

What you need to do

- To bandage someone's hand use a roller bandage.
- Start by putting the end (tail) of the bandage on the inside of their wrist, below the bottom of their thumb and wrap the bandage straight around their wrist, twice.
- Then wrap the bandage from the inside of their wrist, diagonally across the back of their hand up to the nail of their little finger, straight across underneath their fingers and diagonally back across the back of their hand to the outside of their wrist.
- Pass the bandage under their wrist and repeat the diagonal over the back of the hand, across the fingers and back again, so the tips of their fingers are still peeking out.
- Keep going in the same way, bandaging diagonally across the hand like a figure-of-eight, but each time, only cover about two thirds of the previous layer, so that with each new layer you are covering a third of new skin. Make sure you leave the tips of their fingers peeking out though.
- Once you have covered the whole hand, wrap the bandage straight around the wrist a couple of times and then fasten the end using a safety pin or sticky tape or by tucking it in.
- As soon as you have finished, check their fingers for circulation by pressing a finger nail for five seconds until it goes pale. If the colour does not come back within two seconds, the bandage is too tight and you will need to loosen it and do it again. Their hand could keep swelling after you have bandaged it so keep checking their circulation every ten minutes.

How to bandage a sprain

If someone has sprained a joint like an ankle, knee or elbow, you can use a bandage to support the limb.

To make sure you give the right kind of support, bend the joint slightly and then wrap the bandage in a figure-of-eight. You need to wrap it either side of the injury too, to give enough support for the whole area.

(For this example the following description is how to wrap an ankle, but you can use the same method

to bandage an elbow or knee).

What you need to do

- To bandage someone's ankle, use a roller bandage.
- First you need to hold the ankle in a comfortable position, with the joint slightly bent.
- Start by putting the end (tail) of the bandage on the inside of their ankle. Pass the bandage over and around to the outside of the ankle and go around one and-a-half times, so that the tail end of the bandage is firmly covered and will not come loose.
- Then make a figure-of-eight around the joint, wrapping the bandage diagonally above and then below the joint.
- Keep going with the figure-of-eight, but each time only cover about two thirds of the previous layer so that with each new layer you are covering a third of new skin.
- Once you have done this several times, wrap the bandage straight around the ankle a couple of times and then fasten the end using a safety pin, sticky tape or by tucking it in.
- As soon as you have finished, check their toes for circulation by pressing their big toe nail for five seconds until it goes pale. If the colour does not come back within two seconds after you stop pressing, the bandage is too tight and you will need to loosen it and do it again. Their ankle could keep swelling after you have bandaged it, so keep checking their circulation every ten minutes.

How to make an arm sling

An arm sling stops someone's arm moving (immobilisation) and protects it so it can heal. It is also a useful warning to others that someone has an injury so they should be careful around them.

There are two types of arm sling – an arm sling and an [elevation sling](#). You can make both using a triangular bandage.

Arm sling

An arm sling holds someone's forearm in a horizontal or slightly raised position. This gives support for:

- an injured upper arm,
- an injured wrist or forearm,
- someone who can bend their elbow,
- someone with a rib fracture.

Arm sling – what you need to do

Step 1 of 5: Support their bad arm

- Ask them to support their bad arm with their other hand. Slide the triangular bandage underneath it, with the longest edge (the base) parallel to their body at the tip of the little finger. The tip of the bandage (the point) should stick out past their elbow.



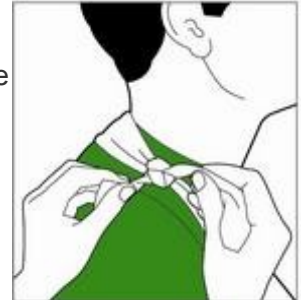
Step 2 of 5: Pull the top bit

- Gently pull the top bit under their bad arm and around the neck to the opposite shoulder.
- Take the bit that is hanging down over their arm and up to meet the other end at their shoulder.



Step 3 of 5: Make a reef knot

- Tie the ends together in a reef knot at the hollow above their collar bone and tuck in the ends.



Step 4 of 5: Adjust the sling

- Adjust the sling so that it supports their arm all the way to the top of their little finger.
- Twist the tip by their elbow until it fits snugly around their elbow and tuck it in or safety pin it.



Step 5 of 5: Check their circulation

- Check their circulation in their fingers and keep checking every ten minutes. If it is too tight, loosen the bandage and sling and tie again.



How to make an elevation sling

An elevation sling supports someone's forearm and hand in a raised position, with fingertips touching their shoulder. It helps to:

- support the arm for an injured hand,
- control bleeding from wounds in the forearm or hand,
- reduce swelling.

Elevation sling – What you need to do

- Ask them to support their bad arm with their fingers resting on the opposite shoulder.
- Put the triangular bandage over their chest, with one end over the good shoulder. Hold the point of the bandage just below their elbow.
- Then tuck the base of the bandage under their hand, forearm and elbow.
- Bring the bit that is hanging down up diagonally across the back, to their shoulder (where fingers are resting).
- Tie the ends together in a reef knot at the hollow above their collar bone and tuck in the ends.
- Twist the tip by their elbow until it fits snugly around their elbow and tuck it in or safety pin it.
- Check the circulation in their fingers and keep checking every ten minutes. If it is too tight loosen the bandage and sling and tie again.

A video of both these techniques is located at:

<https://youtu.be/PwfBGkBXkFA>