

Immediate 1st Aid for Sports Injuries

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Immediate first aid to sports injuries helps to minimise the effect of the injury and protect against further injury.

The reaction of soft tissues (ligaments/tendons/muscles) is to become inflamed. This involves bleeding, swelling and pain. Although these things are essential for healing, if allowed to continue to excess then they may slow the healing process.

Therefore, the aim of early management of injuries is to minimise bleeding, reduce swelling and reduce pain, to do this you must follow the PRICE guidelines. This should be started immediately after injury and continued for up to 3-5 days.

PRICE

- P:** Protection
- R:** Rest
- I:** Ice
- C:** Compression
- E:** Elevation

Protection:

Protection means to protect the injured part from undue stress that may disrupt the healing process and/or cause further injury.

Protection can be in the form of strapping or taping, use of a sling or crutches or simply rest.

Rest:

Rest reduces the energy requirements of the area and prevents any unnecessary blood flow which will allow the area to heal quicker. Rest does not mean completely stopping everything but to avoid activities which aggravate the symptoms.

Rest can be the use of a sling/crutches or static rest (i.e. sitting or lying down.)

Ice:

Ice is applied to limit the body's over-reaction to trauma by reducing the temperature and thereby reducing the energy requirements of the area and reduces blood flow to the area.

Crushed ice wrapped in a damp towel is best (ice cubes can be wrapped in a damp towel and smashed against the wall to crush them).

Ice can be applied for 5-10 minutes maximum every 30 minutes – recent research has suggested. Do not apply ice directly to the skin as this can cause an “ice burn”.

The sooner ice can be applied the better.

Do not apply ice if you have a circulatory problem.

Continued

Compression:

Compression limits an unnecessary accumulation of inflammatory swelling and ultimately reduces over production of scar tissue.

Use a stretched bandaged and begin wrapping below the injured part and work upwards (without too much tension) or use tubigrip.

The area should be compressed a minimum of 10cm above and 10cm below the site of injury.

Loosen the compression if you feel pins and needles or numbness.

Do not apply compression if you suffer from circulatory problems.

Please note: Compression should not be used when lying down or when the limb is elevated.

Elevation:

Elevation is raising the injured area to help lower the blood pressure and therefore limit bleeding and encourage drainage of the swelling. If elevating the arm, then the hand and elbow should be higher than the shoulder and when elevating the leg the foot and knee should be higher than the hip.

Things to avoid within the first 48 hours:**Heat:**

Heat should not be applied to the injured area for 48-72 hours following the injury as it increases the circulation to the area and by increasing the blood flow can increase the bleeding and swelling.

Massage:

Avoid massage directly over the site of injury as this may disrupt the healing process.

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