

Management of Soft Tissue Injuries

RICER

The RICER regime is used for the acute management of soft tissue injury. It has been shown to effectively reduce recovery time following injury by minimising further damage and controlling swelling and bleeding.

R – Rest

Initially try not to put too much weight/strain on the injured site. After 24hrs, it is important that you perform gentle pain free movement exercises for the injured limb so as not to allow the muscles and/or joints to stiffen up.

I – Ice

Ice will reduce blood flow to the area, thereby reducing swelling, bleeding and pain. You should apply ice 15 minutes on 15 minutes off for the first 2-3hrs post injury, and then apply ice for 15 minutes every 2hrs for the next 3-5days or as long as swelling is present. However, your physiotherapist may ask you to continue this process for several weeks. Always use a towel between your skin and the ice to avoid sustaining an ice burn.

C – Compression

Apply compression below, over and above the injured area to help manage swelling. When applying a compression bandage, always start below the injured area (i.e. closer to the hands or feet) and wrap up. Ensure that the bandage is not so tight as to restrict blood flow to the extremities. You shouldn't experience changes of sensation in your hands or feet.

E – Elevation

Elevate the injured area, above heart level if possible, to help reduce the accumulation of swelling.

R – Referral

It is important that you consult your physiotherapist for an accurate diagnosis of your injury. That way, you can commence a specific rehab program early to further enhance your recovery time and optimise your return to sport.



HARM – What to avoid when you sustain an injury

H – Heat

Heat dilates the blood vessels and therefore will increase bleeding and swelling in the area of injury. Avoid hot baths and showers, saunas and heat packs.

A – Alcohol

Alcohol, like heat, dilates the blood vessels. It can also mask the pain and possible severity of the injury which may lead to a delay in commencing the RICER regime and seeking further treatment and advice.

R – Running

Running and any other form of exercise may cause further damage to the injured site and should be avoided for at least the first 72 hours. If the injury is severe enough, quite often your physiotherapist will ask you to take a longer period of rest.

M – Massage

Massage will breakdown any blood clots your body has formed in an attempt to control bleeding. It is therefore really important that the injured site is not massaged.