

MANAGEMENT OF ACUTE SOFT TISSUE INJURIES

The “RICED” Regimen

Injuries can damage soft tissues such as muscles, ligaments and tendons. When soft tissue is injured blood vessels are usually damaged too. This leads to bleeding and swelling around the damaged tissue which can cause pain, further damage, impaired healing and loss of joint range of movement. Therefore reducing bleeding at the site of injury is vital. The first 48 hours following injury are the most important in the management of acute soft tissue injuries. Appropriate treatment will help to relieve immediate symptoms and speed up your recovery. The initial treatment should follow the RICED (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation, Diagnosis) regime and avoid HARM-ful (Heat, Alcohol, Running, Massage) activities.

REST

Rest reduces further injury, bleeding and swelling. Stop activities as soon as your injury occurs and avoid movement of the injured area when possible

ICE

Ice reduces pain, spasm, swelling and bleeding. Apply for 20 minutes every 2 hours for the first 48 hours. This can be achieved with ice cubes wrapped in a moist towel, placed around the injured area and held in place with a bandage

Alternatively frozen water in a foam cup will produce a large ice block that can be moved across the skin of the injured area (apply a little oil to the skin first). Other methods are immersion in icy water and cold gel packs.

COMPRESSION

Compression of the injured area reduces bleeding and swelling. This can be achieved by wrapping the area in a crepe bandage that extends above and below the injured area.

ELEVATION

Elevation of the injury above the level of the heart reduces pain, bleeding and swelling. For lower limb injuries, this can be achieved by lying down with your affected leg resting on a pillow or chair. For upper limb injuries, you can wear a sling.

DIAGNOSIS

Consult a Medical Professional or your Sports Physiotherapist as soon as you are able from expert advice on the severity of the injury and the necessary treatment.



Avoid “HARM”ful Activities:

- HEAT:** Heat increases bleeding at the injured area. Avoid hot baths, hot showers, heat packs, heat rubs/liniments, and hot water bottles for at least 72 hours after injury.
- ALCOHOL:** Alcohol increases bleeding and swelling at the injured area and can lengthen recovery time
- RUNNING:** Running or exercise of the injured area can cause further damage within the first 72 hours after injury
- MESSAGE:** Massage increases bleeding and swelling at the injured area and should also be avoided for the first 72 hours post-injury