

# RICE - Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation Soft Tissue Injury First Aid

## Treatment Tips for Immediate Sports Injury and Soft Tissue Injury First Aid

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If you suffer an injury such as a sprain, strain, muscle pull, or tear, immediate first aid treatment can prevent complications and help you heal faster. One of the most popular acronyms to remember if you get a sports injury is RICE, which stands for Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation. Using these immediate first aid measures is believed to relieve pain, limit swelling and protect the injured soft tissue.

## Soft Tissue Injuries

When an injury occurs the damaged soft tissue may bruise, swell or bleed (externally or internally) and become inflamed. Healing occurs as the damaged tissue is replaced by collagen, perhaps better known as scar tissue. In most cases the tissue needs complete repair before you should return to sports.

At present, the RICE treatment approach is still being recommended by most experts.

## The RICE Method of Acute Injury Treatment

- **Rest:** If you are injured, stop playing, get medical attention if necessary and rest. Resting an injury is important immediately after injury for two reasons. First, rest is vital to protect the injured muscle, tendon, ligament or other tissue from further injury. Second, your body needs to rest so it has the energy it needs to heal most effectively.
- **Ice:** If you are using ice, choose a cold pack, crushed ice or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a thin towel to provide cold to the injured area. An ice massage is another extremely effective way to direct cold to the injured tissue.

Cold provides short-term pain relief and also limits swelling by reducing blood flow to the injured area. As stated above, it's unclear if reducing inflammation entirely is helpful or harmful as it relates to tissue repair and healing times. regard to healing. If you choose to use cold therapy, never apply ice directly to the skin (unless it is moving as in ice massage) and never leave ice on an injury for more than 20 minutes at a time. Longer exposure can damage your skin and even result in frostbite. A good rule is to apply cold compresses for 15 minutes and then leave them off long enough for the skin to re-warm.

- **Compression:** Compression helps limit and reduce swelling, which may delay healing. Some people also experience pain relief from compression. An easy way to compress the area of the injury is to wrap an ACE bandage around the swollen part. If you feel throbbing, or if the wrap just feels too tight, remove the bandage and re-wrap the area so the bandage is a little looser.
- **Elevation:** Elevating an injury help control swelling. It's most effective when the injured area is raised above the level of the heart. For example, if you injure an ankle, try lying on your bed with your foot propped on one or two pillows.

After a day or two of RICE (or RCE) treatment , many sprains, strains or other injuries will begin to heal. But if your pain or swelling does not decrease after 48 hours, make an appointment to see your primary care physician or go to the emergency room, depending upon the severity of your symptoms.