

How do I treat an Acute Injury?

The most important time in the treatment of any injury is the first 24-48 hours

Swelling is a necessary step in the healing process. However, too much swelling can delay healing and cause further tissue damage.

You may have heard of **PRICE** guideline for management of an acute injury. A recent study by Bleakley, Glasgow & MacAuley (2012) published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine advises and upgrade to these principles and to follow the **POLICE** guidelines immediately after injury and for up to 3-5 days afterwards.





PROTECT

- Protect the area from any further damage that may affect the healing process.
- Stop your activity or sport and limit the amount of weight you put through the area. You may need crutches or a brace to help with this initial protection. If you are struggling to put any weight on the area you need to be checked by a suitably qualified health care professional.
- Gently move the joints surrounding the affected area however **NEVER** push through pain and listen to your body.

OPTIMAL LOADING

This means placing the right amount of load and activity through the area to help manage the healing process. Complete rest can lead to deconditioning of tissue, muscle weakness and joint stiffness however over loading can cause increased swelling and further tissue damage. Bone, tendons, ligaments and muscles however all require some loading to allow healing to occur in the correct way.

If you are at all unsure of loading seek medical attention straight away.

ICE

Although there is little high quality research evidence surrounding the use of ice most of us have experienced or witnessed its benefits in reducing swelling and pain following an acute injury. I therefore suggest that you apply crushed ice or an ice pack to the injured ankle. However there are a few safety tips you need to follow when using ice to avoid any further damage:

- Never apply directly to skin in order to prevent an ice burn. Always wrap the ice in a clean damp towel prior to application



- Never apply ice to an area of numbness as you will not be aware if an ice burn is developing
- Never apply ice to an open wound as this could lead to infection
- Avoid prolonged exposure to ice. Only apply for approximately 10-20 minutes, three times a day from the first 5 days following your injury
- Always stop applying ice if there are any adverse symptoms

COMPRESSION

Again little evidence surrounds the use of compression, however in my experience of treating acute injuries I have found it very beneficial. It helps to reduce swelling and pain, enabling restoration of active movement and return to function sooner. A simple ankle support or tubigrip can provide sufficient compression to be effective.

- Ensure it is not too tight that it causes pain or restricts the blood supply
- Remove compression at night to prevent any complications with circulation

ELEVATION

This is to aid in reducing swelling and maintaining good circulation

I advise that you elevate the affected area higher than the joint directly above it. For example; Rest your foot so it is higher than your knee and your knee higher than your hip.

You can apply the POLICE guidelines to any acute soft tissue injury to help manage your initial symptoms

If you have any questions about a recent injury, would like a personalised exercise program written for you or advise on injury prevention strategies specific to your sport



please do not hesitate to contact us either by completing the contact form online, by email or telephoning **0191 2656688** or **07526157458** to book an initial appointment

This information contained in this leaflet is for general advice purposes only. It should not be relied upon as a basis for planning individual medical care or a substitute for specialist medical advice in each individual case. It is strongly recommended that if you have sustained an injury you need to seek appropriate medical attention so a full assessment and appropriate investigations to be carried out.