

RICE for your injuries

RICE is an acronym for rest, ice, compression and elevation.

This formula will dramatically reduce your recovery time.

Rest

The simplest and most effective thing you can do is rest. Many people try to “work through” the injury, but injuries don’t spontaneously disappear, and excessive movement can damage the tissue further. Providing the injury is not severe, rest should not exceed 48 hours. When the pain and swelling subside, begin to gently exercise the injured area.

Ice

Apply ice immediately. Ice is a natural pain reliever and anti-inflammatory. It slows blood flow to the area and reduces internal bleeding and swelling. Healing time can be cut in half.

Put ice cubes in a plastic bag, use a commercial gel pack or a bag of frozen peas. Wrap the item in a cloth and apply it to the injury. Leave it on for 10 to 20 minutes and then allow your skin to warm up. As a general rule, don’t leave the ice on for more than 20 minutes (possible frostbite). Ice the injury once every waking hour.

Compression and elevation

Compression and elevation help reduce swelling. Apply compression with an elastic type bandage - be careful not to cut off your circulation. Arms or legs can be elevated above heart level.

Follow the **RICE** formula for the first 48 hours and then see your massage therapist. It’s not wise to massage the injury within the first two days because this may aggravate the affected tissues. After 48 hours, however, massage becomes a vital part of your rehabilitation.

Massage uses special techniques to drain excess fluids and eliminate muscle spasms.

As your injury heals, massage will help increase your range of motion and stop scar tissue from forming.

When should you use ice or heat?

use ice if:

- your injury is recent (within 48 hours)
- your muscles are in spasm

why ice?

Ice will reduce inflammation and decrease the time it takes for your injury to heal. It also has an anaesthetic effect that will lessen your pain and relax muscle spasms.

use heat if:

- your injury is chronic (more than 48 hours)
- your muscles are tense or knotted

why heat?

In these cases there is no danger of increasing inflammation. The heat will relax your muscles and improve circulation.

when should you see your doctor?

If you have any of the following symptoms:

- stabbing, severe or radiating pain
- numbness or tingling
- significant swelling
- severe weakness
- inability to move the injured part
- pain continues to worsen