

R.I.C.E.

Using Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation for sports Injuries

Running, aerobics and other forms of exercise are good for your health, but these activities can raise your risk for sprained joints, strained muscles and other minor injuries. Proper care in the first day or two after injury can reduce the time you're sidelined by it. Should you suffer a sprain, strain or other muscle or joint injury, treat it with RICE -- Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation. RICE can relieve pain, limit swelling and protect the injured tissue, all of which help to speed healing.

- **Rest:** Resting 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 itself most effectively.
- **Ice:** Use ice bags, cold packs or even a bag of frozen peas to provide cold to the injured area. Make sure to place a layer of cloth between the ice and your skin. **Cold can provide short-term pain relief. It also limits swelling by reducing blood flow to the injured area. Keep in mind, though, that you should NEVER leave ice on an injury for more than 20 minutes at a time. Longer exposure can damage your skin. The best rule is to apply cold compresses for 15 minutes and then leave them off for at least 20 minutes.**
- **Compression:** Compression limits swelling, which slows down healing. Some people notice pain relief from compression as well. An easy way to compress the area of the injury is to wrap an ACE bandage over it. 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 reduces swelling. It's most effective when the injured area is raised above the level of the heart. For example, if you injure your ankle, try lying on your bed with your foot propped on one or two pillows.

After a day or two of RICE, 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.