



Managing sports injuries

Early intervention

This is the most vital step in the correct management of sports injuries. It may involve:

- surgery for serious bone or ligament damage or,
- following the P.R.I.C.E.D. regime for soft tissue injury (sprains and strains).

If these injuries are not treated correctly, they can lead to chronic disability and injury recurrence (eg. a recurrent sprained ankle).

Assessing the injury

It is important to recognise the early signs of an acute injury and what they mean. Any of the following will indicate how serious an injury is:

Pain

A serious injury is nearly always painful (beware of total ligament rupture, which may not be as painful as a partial ligament injury).

Swelling

For example, rapid swelling in a knee joint within one to two hours of the injury indicates a serious injury. It requires urgent attention.

Inflammation

Due to associated bleeding, local heat and redness often accompany serious injury.

Loss of function

Sustained loss of function often indicates a serious injury.

Soft tissue injury

Soft tissue injury is the most common of all sporting injuries. By following the **PRICED** regime, the correct early treatment can be started at the scene of injury.

The **PRICED** regime is most effective in the first 24 to 72 hours after injury.

Prevent

Prevent further injury. This may mean stopping the game, and/or removing the player from the field (eg. a concussed player).

Rest

Stop using the injured part, or you could risk further damage.

Ice

Apply ice locally until the skin is numb, or for about 20 minutes. Reapply when the skin is back to its normal temperature. Use a barrier between ice and skin (eg. wet tea towel - not plastic). Ice reduces pain, bleeding, swelling and muscle spasm.

Compression

Compress with a wide elasticated bandage, wrapped about 10cm above and below the site of injury. This reduces swelling.

Elevation

Raise the injured body part above heart level. This helps the drainage of fluid from damaged tissues.

Diagnosis

If the injury does not settle quickly, seek professional help.

What not to do

Do not **HARM**.

Heat

No hot baths, saunas or spa. No liniments or heat rubs.

Alcohol

No alcohol within the first 24 hours.

Running

Avoid exercise of the injured part.

Massage

No massages.

Any of these activities could promote further bleeding and swelling in the injured part and dramatically delay recovery.

When to get help fast

Seek urgent medical attention in any of the following situations:

- Head injury - where there is loss of consciousness or persistent headache.
- Breathing problems.
- Neck pain.
- Abdominal pain.
- Blood in urine.
- Fractured or suspected fractured bone.
- Serious joint or ligament injury.
- Joint dislocation.
- Eye injury.
- Deep wounds and/or persistent bleeding.
- Injuries associated with severe pain.
- Any injury where there is doubt.

When can I get back in the game?

You can return to your sporting activities when you have achieved:

- Full pain-free movement of the injured part.
- Full strength in the injured part.
- Full co-ordination.
- Good endurance.

Use protective gear (taping, guards, headgear, etc.) to reduce risk of re-injury.

By following these guidelines, the right treatment begins early. This means the injured player gets back in the game as soon as possible - *safely*.

