

Managing minor sports injuries

Note: This self help leaflet does not replace the need to seek a professional medical opinion for your injury.

Early intervention

This is the most vital step in the correct management of minor sport injuries and it involves following the **P.R.I.C.E.D** regime.

If these injuries are not treated correctly, they can lead to chronic disability and injury recurrence (e.g. 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 and whether urgent medical attention is needed.

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 occurring indicates a more serious injury. Seek urgent attention.

Inflammation:

Due to associated bleeding, local heat and redness often accompanies a more serious injury.

Loss of function:

Sustained loss of function with severe reduction in the range of movement may indicate a more serious injury.

Soft tissue injury:

Soft tissue injury (sprains and strains) is the most common of all sporting injuries. This type of injury responds well to the **P.R.I.C.E.D** regime.

The **P.R.I.C.E.D** regime is most effective in the first 24 to 72 hours after injury.

P

Prevent
Prevent further injury. This may mean a cessation from your sport, and/or certain physical activities.

R

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

I

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

C

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

E

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

D

Diagnosis
If the injury does not settle quickly, seek professional advice.

What not to do - H.A.R.M

H

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

A

Alcohol
No alcohol within the first 24 hours.

R

Running
Avoid exercise of the injured part.

M

Massage
No massages

Any of these activities could promote further bleeding and swelling in the injured part and delay your return to normal activity.

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.

How long will I be out for?

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

- Full pain-free range of movement of the injured part.
- Full strength in the injured part.
- Full co-ordination and return of normal balance.
- Return of fitness with good endurance.

Remember to stage your return to full activities and consider using protective gear (taping, supports, etc) to reduce the risk of re-injury.

By following these simple guidelines, the right treatment begins early, and you can get back to sport quickly and safely!

Source: Northern Rivers Division of General Practice

