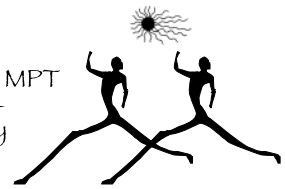


# ACTIVE LIFE HANDOUT

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## ACUTE SPRAIN / STRAIN TREATMENT R.I.C.E.

**What do I do when I sprain or strain a joint or pull a muscle?** If you are injured, either in a sports activity or an accident, one of the best treatments is following the acronym RICE. This can help to relieve pain, decrease swelling and protect the injured area to promote healing.

When you have an injury, the area may swell, bruise or even bleed. It's very important to allow the body this time to heal and rebuild collagen (or scar tissue). The regranulation and proliferation of new tissue happens in the first few days after injury (actually 72 hours). Using ice instead of an anti-inflammatory medication is more beneficial as the medicine can actually inhibit the proliferation of new cells.

# R

Rest is helpful to limit further injury to the tissue you have damaged. Injured tissue can be very susceptible immediately following the trauma. Rest also allows the body the time and energy to heal.

# I

Using any form of ice is helpful. You could use an ice bath immediately after the injury by submersing your body part (ankles, wrists, elbows, knees) in equal parts ice and water for 10-15 minutes (or as tolerated). Frozen vegetables such as peas wrapped in a thin cloth can be very helpful as it can easily contour to the joint. Do NOT leave ice on longer than 20 minutes. Much longer may cause skin injury. My suggestion is 20 minutes on/ 20 minutes off up to the first 2 days. If ice ever becomes really uncomfortable, stop.

# C

Compression will help keep the edema (swelling) down. Compression can be accomplished by applying an ace wrap to the injured area. Beginning furthest away from the heart, apply the ace wrap firmly working closer to the heart. If it is your ankle, begin near the toes and work up to the knee. If the wrap feels too tight, if you begin to feel throbbing or the toes or fingers look really discolored, remove the wrap and begin again wrapping more loosely.

# E

Elevation helps to decrease the edema (swelling). The best way to elevate an injured joint is to prop it up comfortably with pillows or cushions. Try to get the area above the heart. For example, if you sprain your ankle, lying on the couch with your foot propped up on the arm of the couch or on a few pillows keeps the edema from pooling at the foot.

**RICE is good for the first 72 hours after an injury.** If it appears you are not healing and gaining better range of motion, you should consult your physician or physical therapist. While you are elevating your injury, you can also try gentle movement of the joint. Slowly attempt to bend and straighten the joint. No pain is a good guide. Remember not to take anti-inflammatory medication. Ice and compression should help reduce the pain or you can consult your physician about taking medication for relief as well.