

RICE

RICE stands for **Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation**. These easily-administered treatment options, if done well, will ensure that your recovery from an injury is as successful as possible.

Rest: Rest will ensure that there is no further damage done to the injured part. This may mean stopping the activity that is aggravating the injury. Rest can also entail avoiding as much movement as possible and reducing the load through the injured part, i.e. not putting any weight through an injured knee or ankle. The length of time you will need to rest for will depend on the injury.

Ice: Ice is excellent for cooling down inflamed tissues and reducing pain, swelling and internal tissue bleeding post injury. Wrap ice (or a bag of frozen vegetables!) in a damp towel (DO NOT place ice directly on skin as ice can burn), and place on injured area. Continue to use ice on your injury for 10-20 minutes every 1-2 hours for the first 48-72 hours, even if it is starting to feel better.

Compression: Compression also helps reduce swelling and bleeding. Wrap a bandage firmly (but not so tight to cut off circulation!) around the injured area, making sure to start below the injury and finish above the injury site. Keep the compression on throughout the day, in between icing the injury.

Elevation: This also helps to reduce swelling and bleeding. Raise the injured area, using pillows or cushions for comfort and support. If the injury is to the lower limb, try and raise the leg above hip height. In the first 48-72 hours post injury, try and elevate the leg as often as is possible.

NOTE: RICE is now often referred to as **RICED!** The 'D' stands for **Diagnosis**. Early consultation by a medical professional, such as a doctor or physiotherapist, can be useful for diagnosis and management of your injury to ensure you recover as quickly as possible and achieve optimal resolution!

When should I use RICE?

RICE is really important in the acute phase of an injury – that is the first 48-72 hours post injury. Different components of RICE may still be appropriate in both the sub-acute (72 hours – 12 weeks), and chronic (>12 weeks) phases of an injury, as directed by a medical professional.

When should I use ice and when should I use heat?

This can be quite confusing! There are 5 cardinal signs of tissue inflammation following an acute muscle, bone or joint injury. These are redness, swelling, heat, pain and loss of function. It is best to use RICE, including ice in the acute stage, particularly if you have any of these signs. Ice can also be good post activity or sport to aid with recovery. You may be familiar with 'ice baths'. This is when an athlete immerses themselves in a 'bath' of cold water and ice (usually 10 – 15 degrees Celsius). It is thought to aid in muscle recovery by constricting blood flow to the muscles, reduce swelling and flushing out waste product from the tissues. If the thought of trying this makes you squirm... local ice to the affected area will suffice! **Do Not Use Heat On Acute Injuries That Show Signs of Inflammation!!**

Heat is best used on those stiff, sore, nagging, achy muscles or joints that are either chronic or do not show any signs of inflammation. Heat helps to increase blood flow to the region and raise skin temperature, and can therefore be good for relaxing tight or sore muscles. Heat (i.e a hot water bottle or a wheat bag) can be applied for approximately 20 minutes. Make sure you do not apply it straight to your skin, either wrap it in a towel or apply it over the top of clothing. This can be repeated as often as is necessary.