

Commonly Asked Questions.....

When should I be seeking a health practitioner's advice?

Early treatment and intervention can reduce the likelihood of re-injury and ensure an optimal return to activity. If you experience any signs of inflammation that are not settling completely within 48 hours, it might pay to have a health professional such as a doctor or physiotherapist take a look at it, particularly if you still have limited function. If you are unable to weight-bear following a lower-limb injury, it is important to have a health professional look at it straight away.

How do I know if I need an x-ray or not?

An x-ray may be indicated if you have a significant loss of function post injury, or have been subjected to a large external force, e.g. a fall onto an outstretched hand. In lower limb injuries, such as those to the ankle or knee, an inability to weight bear immediately and by the time you present to a health professional, may indicate the need for an x-ray. However the decision to x-ray or conduct further investigations should really be at the health professional's discretion, as they use your clinical signs and symptoms to guide their decisions.

I got a "dead leg" during the game... What is it and when should I seek treatment for it?

A "dead leg" or "cork thigh" occurs mostly in contact sports and usually affects the quadriceps muscle on the front of the thigh. It is the result of direct contact, e.g. an opponent's knee impacts with your thigh, which results in a contusion and subsequent haematoma (bleed) within the quadriceps muscle (which is the same as when you strain the muscle). RICE is very important for a contusion as it constricts the blood flow to the damaged tissue and reduces swelling. **If you are unable to bend your knee more than 90 degrees after 24 hours, you should seek treatment as the bleed may be more extensive.** It is very important that you don't sustain any further knocks to it in the following week so padding is required.

Why warm-up and cool down?

Warming up prepares your body for what you are about to do. It raises your core body temperature, increases the blood flow to the appropriate muscles, improves a muscle's stretch tolerance, and sets the correct motor patterns for the sport you are about to perform. It is important that it encompasses all aspects of your sport, e.g. running, changing direction, changing speed, stretch, jump, passing drills etc. This will hugely reduce your chance of an injury. Warm-ups can last for 30 – 45 minutes depending on the activity. Dynamic stretching is advocated during the warm-up, this is where the stretch is more movement based e.g. performing some slow controlled deep squats.

Cooling down is important for your recovery from exercise. It reduces your heart rate slowly and helps your body to regulate the blood flow back away from the muscles. This assists the 'flushing out' of bi-products that build up in the muscle which can leave your muscles feeling sore and tight. A jog or walk plus stretching for 5 – 10 minutes will help greatly. Static stretching of the major muscle groups and holding each stretch for 30 seconds is best done in the cool down phase after exercise.

Should I be using strapping tape or a brace for my injury once I am back participating?

Just to clarify... a brace or strapping does not replace your rehabilitation!! If you have sustained an injury that has kept you away from activity or sport, it is important that you have done the appropriate exercises and treatment to reduce the risk of reoccurrence! You can still re-injure a joint with tape on if the rehab has been sub-optimal. However, taping or bracing are advocated as they can increase proprioception (joint or muscle position sense) and can also be used for extra padding on an injury. The highest rate of re-injury can be within the first 4 – 6 months following the initial injury, therefore it can be important to brace through this time.

Is it ok to 'Click' or 'Crack' my own joints? What is that sound?

When we 'crack' or 'click' a joint, it is not bones cracking. It is the result of a very quick change in pressure within the joint that is air tight and filled with fluid, and the 'crack' is referred to as a 'cavitation'. What you can hear 'cracking' or 'popping' is most likely to be a small pocket of gas within the joints' fluid.

Sometimes, joints respond well to a quick, short, sharp movement with the resultant cavitation to restore the range of motion at that joint. However, often when we 'crack' our own back, neck or knuckles there is no actual restriction, we are actually taking the joint past it's end range and creating the cavitation. Doing this repeatedly can be quite detrimental to the integrity of the joint and the tissues around it. It may feel good at the time as it gets the endorphins flowing but you may notice the effects don't last long before you feel like you need to 'crack' it again! This means you are not getting the benefits where you actually need them...