

I've injured myself – now what do I do?

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Do I use heat or ice?

When you initially injure a joint or muscle the first priority is to decrease swelling and associated pain. For the first 72 hours ice is recommended in most cases, unless there is no swelling around the joint eg in your back/neck.



Always wrap an ice pack in a wet tea towel to avoid burning the skin and apply it to the injured part for 15 – 20 minutes. You can then reapply the ice periodically throughout the day if the joint is still swollen and painful. After 3 - 4 days you can commence using heat to decrease muscle spasm, however ice can still be used to decrease any swelling.

When should I start stretching?



This depends on the type of injury and what body part you have injured. If you have strained a muscle then you can usually start **very gentle** stretching after a day or so. Your stretching should not cause any pain and should be progressed gradually to improve the muscle length. However, if you have torn a muscle, stretching is not recommended for the initial few days. Remember everyone is different and if you're not sure refer to your doctor/practitioner for advice.

How long should I rest for?

Rest initially from aggravating activities, however it's important to pace yourself back to your original activity. eg do some walking or running in a pool or on a mini trampoline before you start running on hard ground again. Or use an exercise bike to maintain fitness without flaring up your injury any further. You should always complete 1 -2 full training sessions without any problems before playing in a match situation.

Do anti-inflammatories help?

Often anti-inflammatories such as nurofen, ibuprofen or voltaren can help to reduce pain and swelling after an injury. Speak to your doctor or pharmacist for advice regarding this as anti-inflammatories are not suitable for everyone.



Should I use a compression bandage?

Compression bandages are useful in helping to reduce swelling. It is important that they are reasonably firm to maintain adequate compression without being too tight. It's also usually advisable to take them off at night. Alternatively elevation is another way we can reduce swelling around a joint/injury.

When should I seek help?

Most injuries will improve with rest, however treatment from a Physiotherapist, Osteopath or Myotherapist can help speed up the healing process and decrease your pain and swelling. They can also provide you with strengthening exercises to ensure you don't always have a weakness on that side. Usually the earlier you seek treatment the better.



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