

RICE for Routine Care of Injuries

The routine care of many injuries includes rest, ice, compression, and elevation (*RICE therapy*). RICE therapy is often recommended for injuries to soft tissues, such as a muscle strain, ligament injuries, bruises, and overuse injuries. It can also be used for some bony injuries. Using RICE therapy can help to relieve pain, lessen swelling, and enable your body to heal.

Rest

Rest is required to allow your body to heal. This usually involves reducing your normal activities and avoiding use of the injured part of your body. Generally, you can return to your normal activities when you are comfortable and have been given permission by your health care provider.

Ice

Icing your injury helps to keep the swelling down, and it lessens pain. **Do not** apply ice directly to your skin.

- Put ice in a plastic bag.
- Place a towel between your skin and the bag.
- Leave the ice on for 20 minutes, 2–3 times a day.

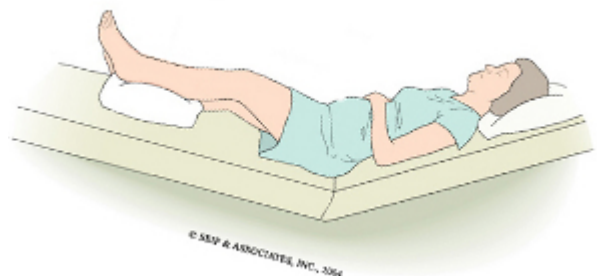
Do this for as long as you are directed by your health care provider.

Compression

Compression means putting pressure on the injured area. Compression helps to keep swelling down, gives support, and helps with discomfort. Compression may be done with an elastic bandage. If an elastic bandage has been applied, follow these general tips:

- Remove and reapply the bandage every 3–4 hours or as directed by your health care provider.
- Make sure the bandage is not wrapped too tightly, because this can cut off circulation. If part of your body beyond the bandage becomes blue, numb, cold, swollen, or more painful, your bandage is most likely too tight. If this occurs, remove your bandage and reapply it more loosely.
- See your health care provider if the bandage seems to be making your problems worse rather than better.

Elevation



Elevation means keeping the injured area raised. This helps to lessen swelling and decrease pain. If possible, your injured area should be elevated at or above the level of your heart or the center of your chest.

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK MEDICAL CARE?

You should seek medical care if:

- Your pain and swelling continue.
- Your symptoms are getting worse rather than improving.

These symptoms may indicate that further evaluation or further X-rays are needed. Sometimes, X-rays may not show a small broken bone (*fracture*) until a number of days later. Make a follow-up appointment with your health care provider.

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE?

You should seek immediate medical care if:

- You have sudden severe pain at or below the area of your injury.
- You have redness or increased swelling around your injury.
- You have tingling or numbness at or below the area of your injury that does not improve after you remove the elastic bandage.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.