

## Health Notes

### R.I.C.E.

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When an injury occurs, people are often confused as to what to use first, ice or heat. The rule of thumb is: ice first for 10-15 minutes per hour. The duration of ice treatment varies but is usually for two to five days.

A traumatic injury to muscles, tendons, and ligaments will usually provoke an exaggerated inflammatory response. The injury will kick-off a spiraling cascade effect of cellular activities. Inflammatory agents are released in a response to the tissue destruction. Swelling and then pain follows, this is the true inflammatory experience. When swelling occurs in a joint, distension of the joint capsule develops and produces pain.

Swelling anywhere will distend tissue and produce pain. If you can control the swelling process, you can then control pain. Controlling pain and swelling permits early joint movement and restores normal function. Ignoring the inflammatory response may allow for the degenerative processes of arthritis to begin. The quicker you can get through the inflammatory process the quicker tissue repair can begin.

Sports medicine people have coined the phrase R.I.C.E. for the regimen of treatment of muscular, tendon and ligament injuries of the extremities.

"R" or *rest* is easy to understand; avoid activities that cause sharp pain. Rest the area until the pain and swelling are minimal. If you are dealing with a knee or foot, crutches may be used at times.

"I" refers to *ice*, the most effective component of "R.I.C.E." that there is. Ice will contract blood vessels, which reduces swelling by restricting the blood flow. This also helps with pain relief. Use ice for 10-15 minutes every hour for the first two to three days. Then three to four times a day until the inflammatory process ends.

"C" is for *compression*. Light compression combined with ice during the first day or two will decrease swelling. Be careful... the technique is *light* compression.

"E" refers to *elevation*. By elevating a swollen extremity, the body's lymphatic system helps dissipate the swelling, and accelerates the process.

This treatment protocol really works! Any questions regarding "R.I.C.E." should be discussed with your doctor.

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