

R.I.C.E. THERAPY

REST – Rest the injured area. Avoid activities that stress that area and be careful not to re-injure the area while it is still weak or sore (up to 6 weeks).

ICE – Ice is used to reduce swelling and decrease pain. Ice should be used for the first 2 to 3 days after an injury or until the swelling goes away. For instance, if you sprained your ankle 5 days ago and it is still swollen, you should continue to use ice.

Ice packs should be used for 20-30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours. When you first apply ice, you will feel coldness, then burning. After several minutes, the area will become numb.

You can make ice packs by placing ice cubes or crushed ice in a Ziploc-type plastic bag or you can use a commercial frozen gel pack. To avoid frostbite, do not put an ice pack directly on your skin. Instead, place the ice pack over a wet washcloth or towel. Use an elastic bandage (Ace wrap) to hold the ice pack in place.

To do ice massage, first freeze water in a paper or Styrofoam cup. Then tear away the top of the lip of the cup and rub the ice over the injured area for 5 to 10 minutes.

COMPRESSION – Use an elastic bandage (Ace wrap) to help compress the area and prevent further swelling. Apply the wrap to the area before getting out of bed in the morning while the swelling is low. Do not apply too tightly which can cause numbness and pain. Elastic bandages also help by adding support to the area and preventing re-injury.

ELEVATION – Elevate the injured area above the level of your heart to decrease swelling. Do this as much as possible, even when you are awake.

PAIN – Ibuprofen (Motrin/Advil) 200 mg tablets. Adults may take 3 tablets every 6-8 hours with a little bit of food on your stomach (glass of milk to a regular meal). The maximum ibuprofen per day for adults is 3200 mg's per day.

STRETCHING – When the immediate pain and swelling has resolved (usually 3-7 days), start gentle stretching of the area to decrease stiffness.

Return for a re-check if your symptoms are worsening after 3-5 days or if your symptoms are still regularly bothering you after 6 weeks.