

Tackling a sports injury

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How you first deal with a sudden injury has a bearing on how good and how quick your recovery is. You should follow the **P R I C E** guidelines below:

Protect the area so you don't keep inadvertently re-injuring it. Exactly what you need to do depends on the area that has been damaged. Protective supports can include crutches, a sling, braces, splints and taping. You may be able to apply this yourself or we can help you with this.

Rest is important during the early phase of healing as it prevents the injured area being stressed. After a day or two you can generally start to move the area again making sure you don't load it too much. This depends on the severity and type of injury so advice from one of our physios can be very beneficial here.

Ice will help to minimise swelling and reduce pain. The easiest way is to use some crushed ice or a bag of frozen peas wrapped up in a damp thin towel before applying it to the skin. Unwrapped ice can lead to an ice burn which clearly won't help! Hold the ice in place by wrapping a dry towel around the pack for around 20 minutes and repeat this every few hours until the pain has settled and the swelling/heat has diminished.

Compression can help minimise swelling and should be applied as soon as possible following the injury. Tubigrip is the commonest way of applying compression but other strapping/bandages can be used. Be careful when using compression – it must be removed at night and you need to be sure that it doesn't prevent adequate blood flow to the ends of the limbs. Always check the areas that are furthest from the body (e.g. fingers and toes) for any signs of reduced blood supply (lack of colour or numbness).

Elevating the injured area above the level of the chest can help minimise swelling and should be done as soon as possible after the injury. Ensure there is sufficient support - lying down (using cushions or pillows) is usually the easiest and most comfortable.



How will I know how severe the injury is?

The injury often appears very severe to start with as the area becomes swollen and bruised but it is often difficult to determine the extent of the injury in the very early stages. Clearly if you have broken a bone this is detectable on x-ray and you should visit your A&E department if you suspect a fracture. In most cases, only the soft tissues are injured but this can still lead to a surprising amount of pain and disability.

Can physiotherapy help?

Yes. Early diagnosis and careful treatment and rehabilitation for these type of injuries results in a faster and more sustainable recovery. Can you imagine any professional sports club deciding to do without their physiotherapists? It is just as necessary for the recreational sports person to obtain physiotherapy treatment when recovering from injury. Physios use a variety of 'hands-on' techniques as well as ensuring people are re-introduced to their activity with specific exercise programmes to help them get back to normal as soon as possible.

When should I seek treatment?

As early as possible. There is substantial evidence to show that leaving these kinds of injury without appropriate physio can lead to long term problems such as stiffness and pain. You will be surprised how quickly you improve with the right treatment.

When can I return to sport or strenuous activity?

You can usually make a gradual return to sport or strenuous activity when the injured area remains pain-free during normal day-to-day activities and sport-specific rehabilitation. Our physiotherapists will be able to estimate how long this will take depending on the type and severity of injury as well as speeding up the process by providing the right treatment.

*The Physios are an experienced team of physiotherapists with two Sheffield practices. Ring us for free advice or to book an appointment on **0114 267 8181**.*

We'd like to lend a hand...