

Rest-Ice-Compression-Elevation

Courtesy of the National Athletic Trainers Alliance

R = Rest

Resting an injured area is necessary to allow the body time to get the effects of the trauma under control and avoid additional stress and damage to the injured tissue. The period of rest required will vary depending on the severity of the injury (e.g. days to weeks). People who do not rest an acute (sudden or traumatic) injury can prolong the inflammation period and increase the healing time required, thereby delaying the recovery.

I = Ice

Ice applied promptly to an injury can slow down or minimize some of the inflammation. The cold causes a closing of the arterioles in the tissue, which reduces the bleeding. The local tissue metabolism slows down reducing its need for oxygen and nutrients, and the nerve impulses are slowed considerably to reduce the pain that's felt, providing a numbing effect.

Examples of ice treatment include using an ice bag or ice bucket for 15-20 minutes or ice massage for 7-10. Heat should only be applied after you are sure that the bleeding and swelling has stopped completely; otherwise, an individual's recovery time will be delayed.

C = Compression

Compression is an application of an Ace Bandage or similar item around the injured area. Its purpose is to help control swelling and to provide mild support.

Any wrap should be applied carefully. Too tight a bandage could constrict or interrupt vital circulation to the area.

E = Elevation

Elevation involves raising the injured area above the level of the heart as much as possible. This position promotes the lessening or elimination of swelling through the use of gravity and lymph drainage system.

To prevent injuries, athletes should:

- Be in proper physical condition.
- Warm up and stretch before participating in any sports or exercise.
- Always wear properly fitting shoes, and replace athletic shoes as soon as the tread wears out or the heel wears down on one side.
- Nourish their muscles by eating a well-balanced diet.
- Use or wear appropriate protective equipment.
- Maintain hydration.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Avoid exercising or playing sports when tired or in pain.
- Walk and work on even surfaces.

For more information, visit www.nata.org