



Soft Tissue Injury Management

The question: "Should I apply a hot pack or an ice-pack to this new injury?" always comes up after an injury. The fact of the matter is that if it's a new injury, within 48-72 hrs, you want to apply a cold pack. Heat to an acute injury can actually work against you and I will explain this statement a bit later.

After a soft tissue (strain, sprain, tear and 'corky') injury, the body responds with its inflammatory process. This process is aimed at repairing the injured area straightaway; however, it tends to overdo it. Suddenly you will have a lot of blood rushing to the area resulting in swelling, pain and less mobility. This actually delays the healing process since return to normal activities is slower.

The **RICER** Acronym is very useful and easy to remember: Follow this process to get the quickest return to activity and the most out of your rehabilitation in the first 48-72 hours.

Here is what you should do...

R – REST: This means stopping what you're doing. If you are playing sport, it is best to leave the court/field and take the next step.

I – ICE: The application of ice to the injury site can reduce the amount of swelling and pain. The blood vessels in the area respond to the cold by constricting (decreasing its diameter) and this reduces the excessive blood flow to the area. Make sure you don't apply the ice directly to the skin since this may cause an ice burn. It is a good idea to wrap the ice in a damp towel/cloth to provide a protective layer between the skin and ice. Generally 10-20 mins every 2 hours is recommended, however, you should be guided by your comfort level. The cold may be a bit uncomfortable initially, but if the discomfort increase or if it becomes painful, remove the ice pack.

C – COMPRESSION: The aim of compression is to reduce bleeding and swelling around the injury site. Use a wide, elastic bandage to cover the area. If it is too tight you may notice a prickly, pins and needles feeling around and further down the injured limb. Also note that 'redness' down the limb may indicate that the bandage is too tight and should be loosed promptly.

E – ELEVATION: If possible, elevate the injured limb above heart level. This will also reduce the amount of bleeding and swelling in the joint due to gravity.

R – REFERRAL: It is very important to see an appropriate health professional. At Eastern Sports and Spinal Care, our physiotherapists would conduct a thorough assessment, provide a diagnosis, treat appropriately and provide a goal-directed, individualised, rehabilitation program to help you return to your normal activities as soon as possible.

Here is what you should not do...

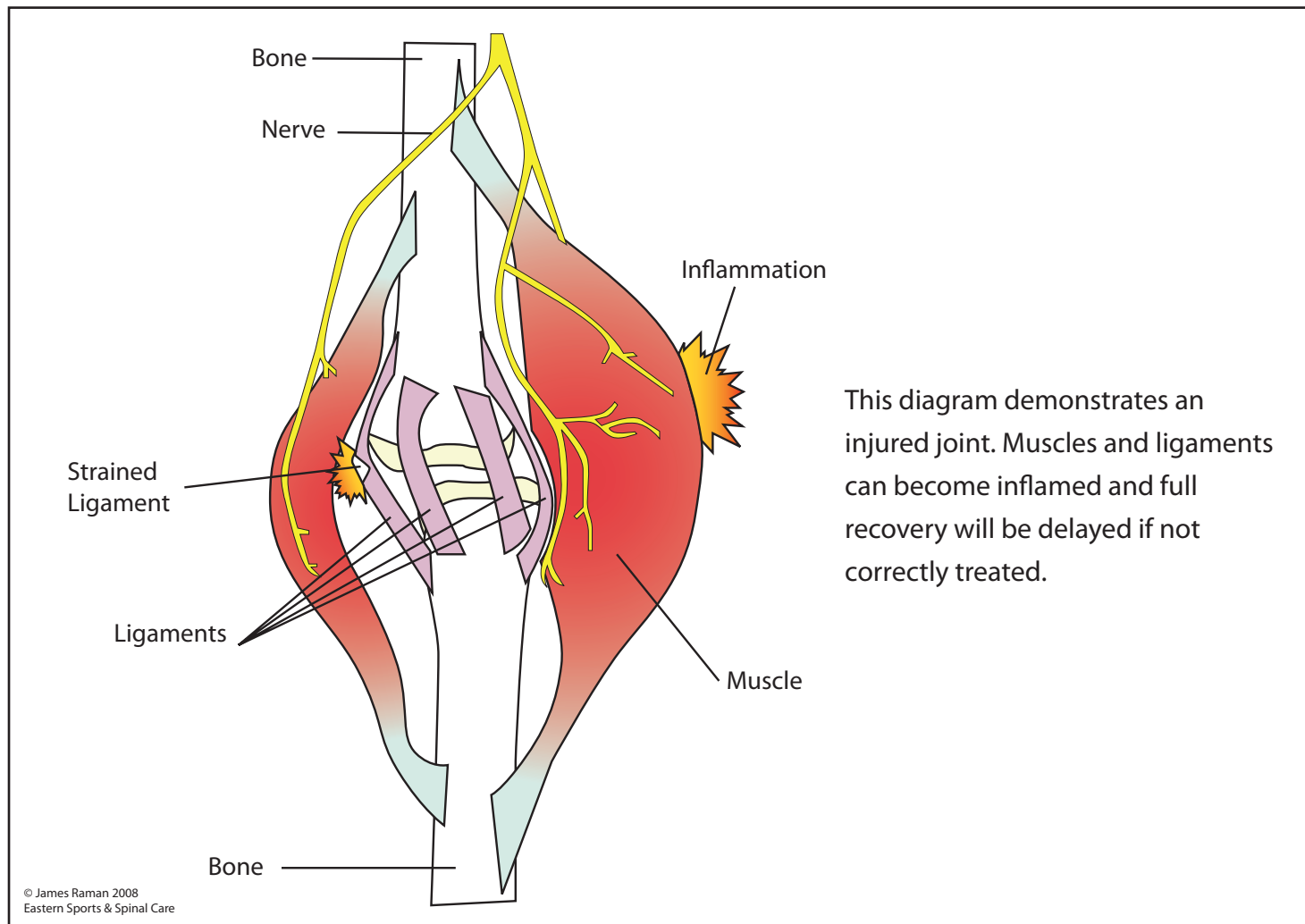
The NO HARM acronym sums it up well:

H - NO HEAT: Heat increases blood flow and swelling and can delay your return to normal activities and rehabilitation. Avoid heat can include anything from a hot pack to liniment creams like 'Deep Heat' or 'Metsal'.

A - NO ALCOHOL: Alcohol is a 'vasodilator', this means that the diameter of blood vessels increase and blood flow increases, thereby increasing swelling.

R - NO RUNNING: Rest the injured part to avoid increased blood flow to that area. When we move, the body directs more blood to that area to supply its energy needs.

M - NO MASSAGE: Massage is very effective in increasing blood flow. It is impossible to 'rub' out a corky (muscle bruise) in the first 48-72 hours, it will only increase blood flow and delay your progress.



Disclaimer: This resource is designed to support physiotherapy management at Eastern Sports and Spinal Care as it is a guide only. This is for personal use only since this resource may not be applicable to your condition and we do not guarantee its success in your rehabilitation. We strongly encourage you to consult a health professional for accurate diagnosis and management