

Injuries and Healing – A Simple Guide!

Injuries - we've all had them!! Quite a few of us are still suffering the after-effects now. So a subject worth looking at in more detail I thought.....

First of all, what is an "injury"? Medically, the term injury is used where there is tissue damage. Injuries result in an inflammatory process. A distinction should be drawn between an "injury" and a "problem". A problem may present with discomfort/pain and dysfunction due to old injuries etc, but there will be no inflammation.

Wherever tissue damage occurs, there will be bleeding vessels and loss of oxygen to the tissues causing cell death. Our body's reaction to this is *inflammation*

The four signs of inflammation are;

- Redness (rubor)
- Pain (dolor)
- Heat (calor)
- Swelling (tumor)

As well as inflammation, injury may result in dysfunction of body part(s) and/or proprioceptive/balance problems.

Healing Stages

It's important to distinguish between an "injury" and a "problem" so that correct treatment can be applied.

Following an injury, a healing process will take place which can be split into 3 distinct phases;

Stage 1 – acute inflammation, bleeding still occurring. This stage normally last for 48 to 72 hours.

Stage 2 – Proliferation/repair stage, depending on depth, severity and structure, the production of collagen should be complete within 21 days of the injury

Stage 3 – Re-modelling Stage. Once new collagen has been laid down, the tissues need to be re-modelled. We need the minimum amount of scar tissue doing the maximum job! This stage can take anything up to 9 months!

Applicable Treatments

The initial management of injuries should be in the following order;

- PRICE
- MICE
- MICES

PRICE – Protect, Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation

This is most applicable during the initial 48-72 hours. As much rest as possible should be taken. When applying ice, consider the depth and severity of the injury – the deeper it is, the longer the ice needs to be applied. For superficial injuries, an application of just 30 seconds can be used. For deeper injuries, 5 to 7 minutes may be appropriate.

MICE – Movement, Ice, Compression, Elevation

Movement may (and should!) be introduced once bleeding has stopped in the tissues. Movement must be within a pain-free range.

MICES – Movement, Ice, Compression, Elevation, Stretch

Stretching should be introduced once fibrous healing is complete, to assist in the remodelling of the tissues. Stretching MUST be directed along the line of stress of the tissue involved.

Once you're past Stage 1 in the healing process, sports massage can be very beneficial in ensuring a successful recovery from the injury. In the 2nd Stage, one of the initial considerations is to remove "debris" from the area and sports massage can certainly help do this, improving venous and lymphatic flow to the area and supplying vital nutrients.

In addition, after such an injury, other muscles around the site of the injury may tighten and sports massage can be beneficial in ensuring that this does not become problematic.

Once you enter Stage 3, assisted stretching can be very useful in helping to re-model the tissues.

So, next time you get an injury, have a think about the above....although us fellrunners tend to think the best cure is a few pints and a long, hard run the next day, that's going to have longer-term consequences and far better to treat and heal the injury before it becomes a chronic, long-term problem.

Now then, I really MUST learn to take my own advice...

... Richard Gilbert MSMA is now a
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