

Exercise Injury Management

When it comes to injuries, certainly *injury prevention* is your first line of defense. Do listen to the cues and modifiers that are indicated during cardio or strength training workouts. But unfortunately, our exercise enthusiasm cannot always thwart the occasional injury. Common causes are insufficient warm-up or stretching, improper form, pivoting too quickly, jerking the weights, picking up or putting down the weights incorrectly, over doing it, stretching too far or even improper footwear. How we handle the injury makes a world of difference in minimizing recovery time and severity of the injury so progress continues.

When injured, your body starts to repair itself by increasing the blood flow to the injured site. However, this can lead to inflammation and although inflammation is part of natural healing, it can result in swelling and pain.

An *injury management* strategy never to forget is the **R.I.C.E.** method. It's an acronym that stands for:

R = rest – get off the injured area – stop the activity that caused the pain

I = ice – immediately apply ice (not heat) to an injury to reduce inflammation and pain

C = compression – put pressure on the injured area, i.e., wrapping an ACE bandage around the site if possible – this also reduces swelling and prevents further tearing

E = elevation – elevate the injured area if possible to drain excess fluids away from site to reduce inflammation

After a day of applying cold to the injury or when swelling has gone down, it's good to apply heat. Heat increases the blood flow, speeding up the healing process and it promotes flexibility. You can use a heat pack, a topical muscle rub, a warm bath or shower or even better – soak the injured site in Epsom Salt. Epsom Salt's magnesium and sulfates relieves pain, improves oxygen use and flushes out toxins.

But here's the key point to remember – if you use the R.I.C.E. method to treat an *acute, immediate injury* – the chance of that injury becoming a *chronic, continued injury* is greatly minimized. You'll be back in action in no time. When returning to your customary workout, it is suggested to ACE bandage the site (if possible) until you feel 100%.

In addition, to prevent weakness and potential injury it's essential to develop all muscle groups within the entire body. One example is chronic back pain. Back pain has affected over 80% of the population at one point or another. But *total body development* will help prevent and manage back pain. Why?

Appropriate exercises and stretches for the muscles of the hamstrings, abdominals, and spinal column strengthen the back and prevent weakness and physical disability. And that's just one example.

It's also estimated that 1 in 3 Americans over the age of 65 falls each year and 2/3's of those who fall will fall again within 6 months. Functional training is essential for it prevents dangerous falls by improving balance, muscular strength and bone density. Functional training is basically any type of exercise that relates directly to the day-to-day activities we perform every day – standing, bending, reaching, carrying, walking, going up and down stairs and so forth.

A safe and effective fitness program should incorporate a *variety* of exercises and stretches to develop all the muscle groups and energy systems, thereby creating balance within the body. The bottom line – you'll be able to accomplish more in your day.

Remember, safety first – let's first prevent the injury. But in case it does happen, know how to treat an injury [**R.I.C.E.**] so you'll make a quick recovery.