

First Aid for Sports Injuries

The Critical First 3 Minutes.



Print this page

Much has been written over the years about sports injury management and ongoing treatment. There's a lot of information about what to do in the first 48 to 72 hours after an injury, and without a doubt, the most effective, initial treatment for soft tissue injury is the R.I.C.E.R. regime. (*This involves the application of **(R)** rest, **(I)** ice, **(C)** compression, **(E)** elevation and obtaining a **(R)** referral for appropriate medical treatment.*)

Most people would agree that the R.I.C.E.R. regime is the first place to start, but what about the moment after the injury occurs? Those first few vital minutes, before you even think about applying the R.I.C.E.R. regime. Very little has been written about those crucial moments just after an injury occurs. That's why this issue of The Stretching & Sports Injury Newsletter is dedicated to the **first 3 minutes** after an injury occurs.

Imagine this...

You're the sports trainer for a local "Under 14's" soccer team (or maybe you're a concerned parent). It's early on a cold winter's morning and the team has been on the field for only a few minutes. You turn your back for a second as two player's race for the ball and collide heavily. One goes down hard and groans loudly. You turn back to see one of your players lying motionless on the ground. You race onto the field, heading straight for the injured player. There's no time to waste, you're 3 minutes has already started. What do you do next?

What you do in the next 3 minutes will have more of an effect on the seriousness of the injury, and the players ability to recover quickly, than what happens in the next 48 to 72 hours. You better not mess this up!

Your First Priority: Do No Further Damage!

Quick! Check to see if the injured player is in any further danger. If so, you need to control it; preferably by removing the danger (i.e. stopping the game) or alternatively removing the player.

Once there is no more danger to the player, you need to get a response from them. Ask if they can hear you, can they open their eyes, do they know what their name is? If you can't get a response, call an ambulance or doctor immediately. Then check their airway, breathing and circulation.

If you can get a response apply the S.T.O.P. regime. (*This involves **(S)** stop, **(T)** talk, **(O)** observe, **(P)** prevent further damage*).

Stop

Stop the injured player from moving! They must stay as still as possible to prevent further damage and allow you to assess the injury.

Talk

Ask the injured player what happened; how did it happen; what did you feel; where does it hurt; does it hurt anywhere else; and have you injured this part before?

Observe

While talking to the injured player take a mental note of what the player is doing. Are they holding themselves in a strange way? Are they lying in an unusual position?

Is there swelling or bleeding at the injury site? Is the injured area deformed or out of shape? Is there a difference when compared to the other limb or side? Is it sore or tender to touch? Can the player move the injured part?

Prevent further damage

It's time to make an assessment of the seriousness of the injury.

1. **Is it a minor injury?** Is it a bump or a bruise that does not impair the player's physical performance? If so, play on. Provide a few words of encouragement; monitor the injury and apply the R.I.C.E.R. regime just to be on the safe side.
2. **Is it a less severe injury?** Is it a sprain, strain or severe bruise that impairs the player's ability to play on? If so, get the player off the field and apply the R.I.C.E.R. regime as soon as possible.
3. **Is it a severe injury?** Does the injury affect the head, neck, face or spinal cord? Does it involve shock, excessive bleeding, or bone fractures and breaks? The treatment of these types of injuries goes way beyond the relatively simple soft tissue injury treatment. Seek professional help immediately.

Well done! Your 3 minutes are up and you've successfully prevented any further damage to the injured player, you've assessed the injury and prescribed the recommended treatment strategy.

If you enjoyed this month's issue of The Stretching & Sports Injury Newsletter, please feel free to forward it to others, make it available for download from your site or post it on forums for others to read. Please make sure the following paragraph and URL are included.

Article by Brad Walker. Brad is a leading stretching and sports injury consultant with over 15 years experience in the health and fitness industry. For more articles on stretching, flexibility and sports injury, subscribe to **The Stretching & Sports Injury Newsletter** by visiting <http://www.thestretchinghandbook.com/newsletter.htm>.
