

Dealing with injuries and injury proofing

When it comes to injury we all need to accept that occasionally we are going to get injured! Some may be lucky and only have a minor injury and some very severe injuries. Injuries happen; it is how you deal with them that will improve your chances of getting back to your best. Below are some useful tips to help you reduce the risk of getting injured.

- Roll your ankles 30 seconds one way 30 seconds the other. This increases your synovial fluid in your ankles giving you more shock absorption while running. Many tears are created in those first few strides! Every time you land when you run 4 times your body weight goes through your body so this is very important!
- Balancing exercises. Your brain relies on nerve endings to tell it where your foot is during the landing process. If you're weak on balance (proprioception) you're more likely to roll-over on your ankles. A simple exercise to do to improve this would be to stand on one foot while brushing your teeth, swapping every 30 seconds for the 2 minutes of brushing. The last minute should be with eyes closed. This makes it harder because it takes away one of your senses but trains your brain and nerves effectively (much more difficult but important as you age!).
- Warm up properly. Take 5-10mins (dependant on ambient temperature) to get up to 'pace' as part of your warm up followed by some dynamic stretches and maybe a few strides (before intensive work).
- Don't run hard workouts back-to-back (see the Hard-Easy-Hard-Easy method)
- Stretch religiously after to bring your muscles back to a state where they can recover quicker and maybe to correct imbalances!!!
- If you're tired don't train. Fatigue is a big cause of injury as the muscle cannot function properly leading to muscular tear – injury. Change that session into a light stretching session instead.
- Ice baths. When you train you create micro-tears in the muscle which the body repairs improving its stress capability: that's how you get bigger/more capable muscles for the use they're being trained. A cold bath followed by a warm shower after intensive sessions will not only help the healing process (increased metabolism) but allow the body to flush out any lactic acid accumulated in the muscles to help with your recovery from the training session.
- Warm down properly. You need to allow your heart to come slowly back down toward your resting heart rate (below 100 pulse). Failure to do so will cause blood pooling in the muscles and could lead to fainting!



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What to do once you have an injury?

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Protection – Protect the injury site from further injury.

Rest – Immobilise as far as possible to allow it to heal.

Ice – Reduces the pain, slows down the swelling.

Compression – Will stop it from swelling.

Elevation – Keeping the limb above the heart if possible will reduce blood flow from the damaged blood capillaries.

Rehabilitation – Seek help. Don't think by leaving it that it will magically heal itself and you'll be as fit as before. Normally an injury leaves the area weaker and prone to further injury!

Icing is very important for the first 48 hours. You need to ice every 2 hours for 20mins. This should then be followed by contrast bathing (hot and cold: to speed up metabolism in the area). As the table below will show you need to gradually add heat to the treatment because once the inflammation stage is finished (0 – 72hrs) you want to add heat to kick-start the healing process.

Days	Start	Ice	Heat	Finish
0 – 2	Ice	20 mins	-	Ice
3 – 4	Ice	4 mins	1 min	Ice
5 – 6	Ice	2 mins	2 mins	Ice
7 – 8	Ice	1 min	4 mins	HEAT
9 +	HEAT	-	20 mins	Heat

The process lasts for 20mins. So for example Days 3 – 4 you start by icing for 4 minutes then heating for a minute then back to ice for 4 minutes and so on until you do 20mins. Make sure you finish on the right contrast as stated above. You can use ice bags or frozen peas for your icing and hot water bottles for your heating.

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