

## **Tips for Dealing With Acute Injuries:** *Remember the acronym P.R.I.C.E.*

**Protect** the injured area. Crutches and/or a splint/brace may be needed for this.

**Rest** the injured area. This requires temporary cessation or modification of any irritating activities. **IMPORTANT:** activity should be PAINFREE—if it hurts, don't do it!! **R**esume **E**xercise below the **S**oreness **T**hreshold when you're able.

If you're using a splint/brace/immobilizer, remove it every 1-2 waking hours, inspect your skin, and move your affected joint (e.g. wrist, ankle, knee, finger) through a painfree arc of motion 10-15 times in each direction the joint normally moves. Movement helps keep healthy tissues from degenerating & promotes the formation of supple & strong repair (scar) tissue. If you're using an ankle/foot immobilizer (boot), remove boot & stretch your calf muscles for 30 sec. several times a day using a towel around your forefoot while long sitting or standing & leaning against a wall (your therapist will show you how to perform these). **IMPORTANT:** motion should be PAINFREE—if it hurts, don't do it!! If you're using a compressive wrap or sleeve, remove this, inspect skin and reapply at least 3 times every day. The wrap/sleeve can be worn at night as long as it does not compromise your circulation or your sleep.

**Ice** the injured area to control swelling & pain. While swelling is part of the healing process, limiting the extent of swelling early on can reduce the overall recovery time. Cold can be applied in the following ways:

- **Ice pack:** A bag of ice cubes, a commercial pack, or a bag of frozen vegetables can be applied over the injured area. A moistened cloth should be used between the skin & ice pack. The pack can be left on for 15-20 minutes & reapplied 3-5 times daily with at least 30 minutes between applications. Re-useable commercial cold packs are available for purchase in the PT department. The cost for these is ~\$5.00. These packs can also be warmed in a microwave for heating purposes.
- **Ice massage:** An ice cup or ice cube can be rubbed over the area for 5-10 minutes until the area is numb to touch. This should be repeated 3-5 times daily, waiting at least 30 minutes between treatments.
- **Ice immersion:** The injured area can be submersed in ice water for 5-10 minutes. This works particularly well with injured toes or fingers & can be repeated 3-5 times daily with at least 30 minutes between treatments.

**Compress** the injured area to help reduce swelling. Use an elastic bandage (e.g. Ace Wrap) to apply gentle pressure. A piece of felt over bony prominences can increase the effectiveness of soft tissue compression.

**Elevate** the injured area as high as possible (at least above heart level) to help reduce swelling.

If you choose to take a non-prescription pain reliever [e.g. ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®), naproxen sodium (e.g. Aleve®) or acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®)], follow the product's instructions. The smallest effective dose of any pain medication should be used. If you need more substantial pain relief, schedule an appointment with an SHC provider (at the SHC front desk—785-8558) or with another qualified healthcare provider.