

Managing a Soft Tissue Injury



Growing a
healthier workforce

What is meant by soft tissue injury?

Soft tissue injury is a result of trauma or overuse to the muscles, tendons or ligaments anywhere in the body. Recovery time can vary from one to six weeks depending on the severity of the injury. Most soft tissue injuries do not require any intervention as they will get better by themselves over time.

Symptoms can include:

- Pain to the affected area or joint.
- Swelling, heat, redness, bruising around the affected joint.
- Loss of function and instability (if severe).

How can I manage these symptoms?

Remember - RICE - Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation:

- **R**est: stop all high levels of activity in the first 72 hours.
- **I**ce: place ice/ frozen peas in a damp towel, or a cold pack onto the area for no longer than 20mins, every 2-3 hours.
- **C**ompression: if needed, this can help manage swelling and make some movements more comfortable. The compression garment must be removed at night.
- **E**levate: keep the injured area supported and raised with pillows, if able raise the limb above the level of the heart. Try to avoid prolonged periods of rest as this may increase pain initially when you start moving.
- Gentle movement: of the affected area to prevent stiffness and encourage blood flow to the area. This will help with recovery of the tissue

In the first 72 hours after injury avoid:

- Heat including hot baths, showers and heat packs.
- Alcohol as this can increase swelling and bleeding and slow down the body's natural healing.
- Any form of high intensity exercise such as running.
- Massage to the area as this can increase swelling and bleeding to the tissues affected.

Pain relief

Keeping your pain well controlled is an important part of managing your recovery. Taking regular medication does not mask pain, it helps you to stay active and will speed your recovery. If you feel your pain is poorly controlled then you should contact a pharmacist or GP, they will be able to give you advice about which medication to use.

Returning to normal activities

As the injury starts to feel better, it is important to gradually return to all of your normal activities and general light exercise. Whilst doing this, it is normal to experience small, manageable levels of discomfort and this is unlikely to cause any harm. As time progresses and your activities increase, your symptoms should continue to improve.

Follow up

If you are struggling to manage either at home or at work, or are unsure about your injury and its management, you can self-refer to the staff physiotherapy service.

Information on how to self-refer can be found on the trust's health and wellbeing intranet page under your well-being, physiotherapy issues.

We're here to help

If you need further information or advice, please contact the staff physiotherapy service telephone 01670 564010, internal extension 36010.