

Soft Tissue Injuries

Soft tissue injuries are injuries (excluding fractures) affecting the joints and muscles of the limbs. Sprains, strains, bruising and dislocations are considered soft tissue injuries.

The treatment of soft tissue injuries is based on resting the injured part, applying ice packs to limit swelling and reduce pain. In the bushcraft environment this can be supplemented by submersing the injury in running water, a stream for example. The application of a firm compression bandage as support, and elevation of the limb.

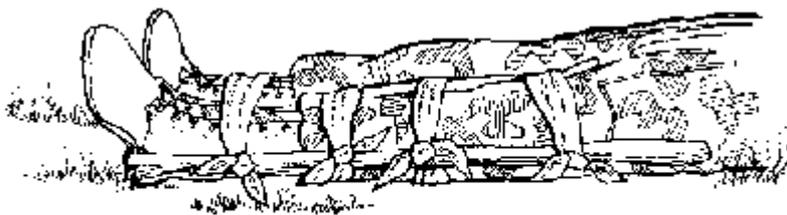
This treatment is known as 'RICE'= Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation.

If ice packs are used, they should not be placed directly onto the skin, instead place them on top of a bandage. The pack should only remain on the injury for a period of 10 min, before being removed to allow the injury to warm naturally.

Sprains

Sprains involve the over-extension of a joint, usually with partial rupture of the ligaments, caused by a rapid movement to the joint without the muscle being able to adapt to the sudden movement. There may also be blood vessel, nerve and tendon damage. An injury with severe ligament damage may require subsequent immobilisation plaster will not be available so you will require to improvise with your treatment.

The easiest method of immobilisation is to wrap the injury in an elastic dressing, however if more support is needed then you will need to splint the injury. The splint can be made from a length of wood, but when you wrap it to the area, it must be placed on the opposite side to the injury. Any lashing should also be tied away from the injury.



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sudden pain in the joint.
- Loss of power and ability to bear weight.
- Bruising.
- Swelling.
- Site becomes tender, painful to palpate.

CARE AND TREATMENT

- RICE

Strains

Strains involve over-stretching of the major muscles of the limb. Muscles are attached to bones by tendons, which tear if a muscle is forced to stretch excessively. This injury is usually less severe than a sprain, but can still have complications if not managed correctly.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Pain, increasing on movement.
- An audible 'crack' may be heard as the tendon parts from the bone.
- May have a discernible gap between muscle and bone.
- Tenderness, discomfort when weight bearing.
- Swelling if near joint.

CARE AND TREATMENT:

- RICE
- Avoid stretching the injured limb.
- Dependant on the severity, you may need to apply a light strapping to the injury.
- If pain persists, take mild analgesics.

Dislocations

Dislocations involve the displacement or removal of bone from a joint. These injuries are often underestimated, and can have serious consequences in the form of damage to nerves and blood vessels.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Sudden pain in the affected joint.
- Loss of power and movement.
- Deformity and swelling of the joint and tenderness.
- May have some temporary paralysis of the injured limb.

CARE AND TREATMENT:

- RICE
- Support limb in position of comfort.
- Seek medical assistance DO NOT try to relocate the bone and joint.

Bruising

Bruising, or more correctly, "contusion", is bleeding by damaged blood vessels beneath the surface of the skin. This is invariably caused by blunt trauma, the application of force to the injured site.

A common injury, especially in the bushcraft environment. This can be caused by a fall, the striking of an area with heavy or dense object, which involves damage to blood vessels as well as injury to the muscle tissue. Although not a serious injury, it is very painful and prompt first aid assists in a rapid recovery.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Pain and tenderness, swelling and discolouration.

CARE AND TREATMENT:

- RICE

Procedures for immobilisation

Before beginning first aid treatment we need to gather whatever splinting materials are available. Materials which can be used for splints are, wooden boards, branches, or poles. Other splinting materials include padding, improvised bandages, clothing or even natural padding like grass, ferns & pine branches. We must ensure that splints are long enough to immobilize the joint above and below the effected area. If possible, use at least four ties (two above and two below the injury) to secure the splints. The ties should be non-slip knots, a bowline is ideal and should be tied away from the injury and the splint.



This type of sling is used to support a wrist injury.



Type of sling used to support the lower arm or elbow.



This type of sling is used to totally immobilise the arm and shoulder.