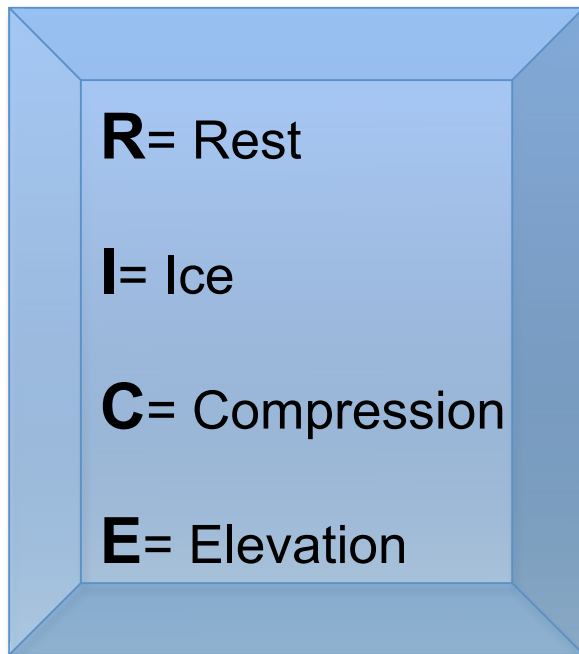




Treating Minor Muscle Strain

All physically active people experience some aches and pains from time to time, and there are some measures you can take to minimize discomfort and aid healing. RICE is an acronym for a time-proven method for dealing with over-exertion and minor muscle injuries.



A muscle injury that stings, does not improve in a few days, or impedes mobility should be evaluated by a doctor. Discomfort this severe may indicate a sprain, significant muscle tear, or underlying bone injury. Only a doctor can identify these types of injuries accurately.

Resting an injury is important, not just to allow the injured muscle or muscles to heal, but to prevent the injury of related muscles due to over compensation. When one muscle group is weakened, our bodies often compensate through other muscles

groups. In effect, uninjured muscles work “double-duty.” Continuing to practice with a sore shoulder by favoring the other increases the likelihood of injuring both, and, despite “favoring,” muscles in the injured shoulder are still working. Resting for a few days shortens recovery time and minimizes the possibility of reinjury.

Icing injured muscles constricts blood vessels and arteries to reduce inflammation and discomfort. Ice packs or bags of ice should not be applied directly to the skin due to the possibility of burns and skin irritation. Wrapping a bag of ice in an old pillow case or t-shirt should provide skin protection while allowing the cold to penetrate. Apply ice to an injured area for fifteen minutes, remove for five, and repeat. Icing after discomfort has



passed or as a preventative after intense workouts can also be beneficial to muscle healing and maintenance.

Compression wraps help reduce swelling. Swelling is believed to slow the healing process. Wrap the injured area using a bandage, but don't wrap too tightly. If the injured area throbs (you can feel your pulse against the wrapping), the bandage is too tight. Adjust the bandage frequently, and be sure to keep the bandage and injured area clean.

Elevating the injured extremity can also reduce swelling. If possible, raise the injury above the heart. If the extremity starts to tingle or feels like it has "fallen asleep," lower the extremity. If using a compression dressing at the same time, loosen the bandage.

Injuries should show improvement and a reduction in discomfort in about 48 hours. If the level of discomfort remains the same or has worsened, mobility issues develop, or there seems to be a misshapeness to the injured area, a doctor should be consulted.

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