

# BACK IN THE GAME

by Denis Enright

## 10 tips for injury recovery

**No one wants an injury that prevents them from competing, exercising or just getting on with everyday life. But injuries are a part of participating in sport, and your body has to go through a healing process to repair properly. These strategies will help you minimise your time on the sidelines – and are also relevant to non-sporting injuries.**

### 1. Rest as needed



Following an injury, whether big or small, you have to rest. An injury normally occurs due to sudden or ongoing stress which causes trauma to a body part (breaking of tissues, muscle, bone, bleeding) and so this needs time to recover. Rest can be achieved by not taking part in the activity causing the problem, using crutches, altering the way you train and so on. Rest should be 'relative'; you don't need to stop doing everything, but you do need to alter or adjust your training until your injury has fully healed.

### 2. Wrap and elevate



Wrapping and elevating the injured area reduces swelling for the same reasons as using ice. The most common forms of wrapping are compression tubing and bandages. Some injuries may not be suitable for this approach – so if you are unsure, seek advice.

### 3. Cool it down

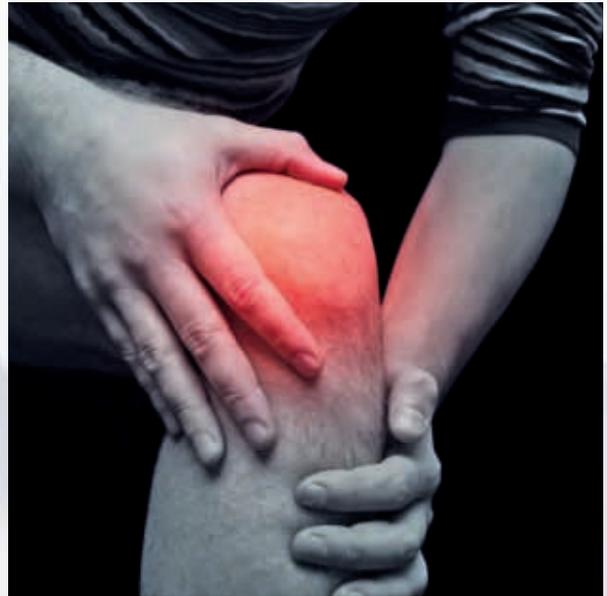


You often see ice being used immediately after an injury to prevent swelling. By reducing blood flow to the area, ice will prevent compression which could otherwise cause further tissue damage. Some blood flow is essential, though, because the blood carries the cells needed to heal the area. How long to ice an injury for is controversial but most agree that a maximum of 10 minutes at a time is sufficient – longer may be detrimental to the body's natural healing process. Ice is mainly used immediately following an injury and up to about 36 hours afterwards – but you can go on for longer if you find it useful.

### 4. Ask a professional



We've all taken advice from friends with similar injuries to ourselves, and there is a wealth of information on the internet.



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However, if information is not specific to your situation, or not used appropriately, it can hinder your recovery. If you have any doubts, or recovery seems overly slow, then seek professional advice. The right professional will be able to tailor an approach to your circumstances, which will be most beneficial to your recovery.

### 5. Do as you're told!



Healthcare professionals aim to get clients back to sporting activity as quickly and safely as possible, and we are always frustrated when advice and guidance is not followed, leading to worsening or further injuries. We know what we are talking about and have your best interests at heart – so listen to us!

### 6. Listen to that voice in your head



If you feel that your knee, shoulder, foot, or whatever, isn't up to getting back into full training, then more often than not it isn't ready. You know your body and how it feels, so don't ignore those warning voices in your head. Sudden injuries generally cannot be prevented, due to the nature of sport – but with chronic injuries, you need to ask yourself, 'Can my body take it?'. If not, don't keep going as it will probably make it worse. If you haven't listened to yourself in the past, and gone back too early, then learn from your mistake and don't do it again.

### 7. Don't pretend you heal more quickly than everyone else



Goal-setting can't be underestimated. Goals are important: as sports men and women, goals are what you work towards most of the time. When recovering from an injury, unrealistic goal-

setting is common as you are keen to get back as soon as possible to meet your sporting targets. However, be realistic, as your overall goal might be jeopardised if you return too early. Re-assess your goals and be honest with yourself about what you can achieve. It's better to take 4 weeks out in the first instance – rather than just 3 weeks, which then turns into 6 due to re-injury.

### 8. Don't be lazy



Do your rehabilitation properly and don't just wait for your injury to heal. Specific rehabilitation is important to return your injured area to pre-injury state. Once healed, you will be able to go back to your chosen activity, but you may be more susceptible to further injuries. Undertaking rehab specific to your injury early is thought to speed recovery and healing, and help prevent re-injury further down the line.

### 9. Make the right choices



After injury, avoid drinking alcohol, or having the injured area massaged. Massage increases blood flow to the area and hence slows healing. Alcohol affects your liver and therefore your body's metabolism – and you want this at its best to deal with your injury.

### 10. Think positive



Thinking positive speeds recovery! When we think negatively, we tend to act in ways that are unhelpful. For example, getting frustrated about time out of training will make you more likely to go back too soon, or not spend the time needed on rehabilitation. Accept what has happened, and move forward positively.

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