

R.I.C.E Explained

Have you ever been told to “R.I.C.E it” after you’ve been injured? R.I.C.E is a handy acronym used to assist in initial management of musculoskeletal injuries – but what does it really involve? **Abbie Cagliarini, Physiotherapist**, from our Langwarrin Clinic explains what R.I.C.E is and how to maximise it’s benefit.

RICE stands for rest, ice, compression and elevation, and is to be performed for 2-3 days following the initial injury. It can help with reducing pain, swelling and inflammation at the site of injury.

REST

To put it simply – if it hurts don’t do it!

Rest involves protecting the injured area by avoiding activities that increase pain levels. This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t move at all, it means you should avoid things that noticeably increase your pain either during or after the activity. It may also involve the use of a gait aid (e.g. crutches), a brace or even taping to reduce load and further protect the injured area.

ICE

The best way to apply ice is using crushed ice through a damp tea towel/cloth or a plastic bag. Ice can be applied directly onto the skin – it may not be comfortable but it is effective! As a general rule, ice should be applied for 20 minutes every 2 hours (including nights!). This time may change depending on the method of ice application as well as the site of the injury and how close it is to the surface of the skin. Ice reduces the temperature of the injured tissues, which decreases pain and the extent of damage in the tissues surrounding the injury.

COMPRESSION

This is a simple one – use a bandage (most commonly a tubular bandage or ‘tubigrip’) during daylight hours to reduce swelling. If you experience pins and needles, numbness or colour change in the skin the bandage is too tight and needs to be removed! Remember to remove at night.

ELEVATION

By elevating the injured limb above your heart (e.g. resting a sprained ankle up on a pillow while lying down) inflammation and swelling in the injured area is minimised.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

New developments in this area are considering a new approach called POLICE, where the R in RICE is replaced with POL which stands for Protection and Optimal Loading. This aims to avoid complications that may follow the lack of use of the injured part (or too much rest), such as excessive stiffness and weakness. It is thought that early graded activity or optimal loading encourages recovery, and when used sensibly may be more beneficial than the potentially outdated ‘Rest.’

If you’ve recently been injured, get it checked sooner rather than later. Make an appointment with a Physiotherapist at your [local clinic](#).