

## Initial Care of Minor Orthopedic Injuries

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In this issue, I am going to discuss what to do immediately for an minor orthopedic injury that occurs in the dojo.

Of the major importance in musculoskeletal injuries is the initial control of hemorrhage, early inflammation, muscle spasms, and pain. The acronym for this process is **RICE** (rest and reduction of movement, ice, compression, and elevation).

### Initial steps to follow for an injury:

1. Apply **ice**, not heat, to the area of injury immediately for 20 minutes every two hours for the first 48-72 hours. Cold can be utilized in the form ice cubes in a baggie, frozen package of vegetables, etc.. Prolonged application of cold can cause tissue damage, therefore do not apply a cold pack directly to the skin because of freezer burn. Use a paper towel or cloth between the ice and area of injury. Hold ice pack firmly to the injury site. Cold decreases swelling by vasoconstriction of blood vessels therefore decreasing blood flow to the injured area and helps to minimize pain.
2. **Elevate** injured part above the level of the heart. This will reduce bleeding into the tissues and encourage venous return, further reducing swelling.
3. **Compression** with an elastic wrap or tape, assists in decreasing hemorrhage and hematoma formation in surrounding tissues.
4. **Rest and reduction of movement**. This can be achieved by not moving the part by the application of tapes, wraps, or splints. Rest and immobilization of an injury for the first 2-3 days helps to ensure healing and increase recovery period.

\*Important Note: Any orthopedic injury, may involve one or more of the following tissues structures of the body: muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, and blood vessels. Therefore remember, careful assessment of the injury by a health care professional may be necessary as soon as possible.