

Q: "How can I treat knee pain?"

A: Depending on the cause of your knee pain, there are some things you can do at home to relieve pain and swelling that may be hindering normal movement.

Inflammation is the body's immediate response to injury. Controlling inflammation and limiting further injury to knee tissue should be the goal of at-home treatment for a knee injury. A common protocol for reducing pain and inflammation in a joint is RICE:

- **REST** the knee. Appropriate rest reduces repetitive strain on the knee brought on by activity. Rest provides the knee with time to heal and helps prevent additional injury.
- **ICE** the knee. Applying ice reduces swelling. Ice the knee two to three times per day for approximately 20 minutes each time.
- **COMPRESS** the knee with a knee brace or wrap. Compression helps reduce swelling can be used to keep the knee properly aligned.
- **ELEVATE** the knee. Elevation is another way to reduce swelling by working with gravity to drain fluid that would otherwise accumulate in the knee. Elevation is most effective when the knee is higher than the heart.

Over-the-counter medications are also helpful in reducing pain and swelling. Commonly used pain relievers called nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as naproxen and ibuprofen, also play a role in the treatment of knee pain. These drugs control pain and help reduce inflammation. People with kidney disease, bleeding problems or stomach ulcers should not take NSAIDs.

If your symptoms have not gone away after trying RICE therapy for a week, you should set up an appointment with your doctor, a sports medicine physician or an orthopedic specialist for further evaluation.

Some injuries require immediate medical intervention. If you experience any of the following symptoms you should go to the emergency department:

- If you cannot put weight on your knee, you may have a fracture that requires immobilization or surgery.
- Fever (may indicate infection)
- Unbearable pain
- Drainage
- Puncture or large wounds

Always keep in mind that putting off a trip to your doctor for an injury can hinder healing. The earlier you treat your injury the better your chances for complete recovery and getting back to the activities you love.

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