



Information for patients, relatives and carers

Soft Tissue and Sports Injuries

Treatment of soft tissue injuries involves first aid management for the first 24 - 48 hours and rehabilitation over the following weeks.

First aid management:

- **Rest:** stop activity and rest the affected part of the body for the first 48 to 72 hours to prevent further damage. Use a sling or walking aid if mobilising
- **Ice:** wrap some ice in a towel and apply to the injury every two hours for 10-15 minutes at a time during the first 48 to 72 hours to reduce swelling
- **Elevation:** elevate the affected limb when resting or sleeping

The above should help to reduce swelling and bleeding.

Pain relief

Initially it is important to take painkillers regularly, to allow you to mobilise. You should be able to reduce the frequency as the injury heals. You can take over the counter medication such as paracetamol, ibuprofen or co-codamol as recommended. If you require stronger pain relief contact your GP for review.

Early mobilisation

Early mobilisation has been shown to reduce pain, swelling and improve limb function compared to immobilisation. This is because it prevents joint and muscle stiffness, maintains muscle strength, and stimulates tissue healing with correct alignment of scar tissue.

Gentle mobilisation should be started within the first 48 hours and may be helped by protective bracing, taping, or strapping.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is the progressive return to your previous level of sport or activity. You should start with walking or other gentle activity. Once you can exercise gently without pain, then you can progress on to more intensive exercise, followed by training, then more sport specific exercise before finally getting back to competitive sport. At every level the exercise should be **pain free** before you progress to the next level of activity. This may be done under the guidance of a physiotherapist.

Muscles can become wasted after injury due to pain and reduced mobility, so **muscle conditioning** involving both strength and endurance training will help recovery.

Flexibility is also reduced. Regaining full range of joint movement is an early part of rehabilitation and appropriate stretching is incorporated later.

Body awareness / balance exercises are started as soon as you can weight-bear. A **core-stability** programme should also be included.

Finally, you can maintain your **cardiovascular fitness** by doing alternative exercise such as swimming, cycling or gym machinery that does not aggravate the injury.

Throughout the programme, pain (or lack of it) should guide your speed of rehabilitation. If it is painful, slow down or go back a step. You will get there in the end.

① If you have further concerns about your condition, please contact your GP. If you are not sure what to do, call 111 or get help from 111 online: <https://111.nhs.uk/> [When to use NHS 111 - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/when-to-use-nhs-111/)

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services. PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk. An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats: If you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print, Easy Read or audio, please ask the staff who are looking after you.

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