Knee Wraps (Elastic Bandage) and R.I.C.E.

Knee wraps come in many different shapes and sizes and perform many different functions. Some wraps may provide cold therapy or warmth. Your caregiver will help you to determine what is best for your protection, or recovery following your injury. **The following are some general tips to help you use a knee wrap:**

- Use the wrap as directed.
- Do not keep the wrap so tight that it cuts off the circulation of the leg below the wrap.
- If your lower leg becomes blue, loses feeling, or becomes swollen below the wrap, it is probably too tight. Loosen the wrap as needed to improve these problems.
- See your caregiver or trainer if the wrap seems to be making your problems worse rather than better.

Wraps in general help to remind you that you have an injury. They provide limited support. The few pounds of support they provide are minimal considering the hundreds of pounds of pressure it takes to injure a joint or tear ligaments.

The routine care of many injuries includes **Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation** (RICE).

- **Rest** is required to allow your body to heal. Generally following bumps and bruises, routine activities can be resumed when comfortable. Injured tendons (cord-like structures that attach muscle to bone) and bones take approximately 6 to 12 weeks to heal.
- **Ice** following an injury helps keep the swelling down and reduces pain. Do not apply ice directly to skin. Apply ice bags for 20-30 minutes every 3-4 hours for the first 2-3 days following injury or surgery. Place ice in a plastic bag with a towel around it.
- **Compression** helps keep swelling down, gives support, and helps with discomfort. If a knee wrap has been applied, it should be removed and reapplied every 3 to 4 hours. It should be applied firmly enough to keep swelling down, but not too tightly. **Watch your lower leg and toes for swelling, bluish discoloration, coldness, numbness or excessive pain. If any of these *symptoms* (problems) occur, remove the knee wrap and reapply more loosely. If these symptoms persist, contact your caregiver immediately.**
- **Elevation** helps reduce swelling, and decreases pain. With *extremities* (arms/hands and legs/feet), the injured area should be placed near to or above the level of the heart if possible.

Persistent pain and inability to use the injured area for more than 2 to 3 days are warning signs indicating that you should see a caregiver for a follow-up visit as soon as possible. Initially, a hairline fracture (this is the same as a broken bone) may not be seen on x-rays.

Persistent pain and swelling **mean limited weight bearing (use of crutches as instructed) should continue. You may need** further x-rays.

X-rays may not show a non-displaced fracture until a week or ten days later. **Make a follow-up appointment with your caregiver.** A *radiologist* (a specialist in reading x-rays) will re-read your x-rays. **Make sure you know how to get your x-ray results. Do not assume everything is normal if you do not hear from your caregiver.**

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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