RICE – Acute Management of Musculoskeletal Injuries

Every first aid effort after an acute injury should be directed towards one primary goal, reducing the amount of swelling resulting from the injury. There is a little question that if swelling can be controlled initially, the amount of time required for injury rehabilitation will be significantly reduced. This can be accomplished through the initial management of rest, ice, compression, and elevation (RICE).

Rest:
Rest after any injury is an important component. If the injured part is not rested and is subjected to external stresses and strains, the healing process never gets a chance to do what it is supposed to do.

Ice (cold compression):
Cold application should be used in the initial treatment of acute injuries. Therefore, ice is used for most conditions involving strains, sprains, and contusions. It is most commonly used immediately after injury to decrease pain and promote local constriction of the vessels, thus controlling the hemorrhage (bleeding) and edema (swelling).

Ice application should last 15-20 minutes (no longer than 20 minutes!), and be applied 4 times a day for 72 hours after an acute injury. For best results, ice packs should be applied with a compression wrap.

Compression:
Immediate compression via an Ace wrap or body part brace will place external pressure on the injured area, thus decreasing hemorrhage (bleeding) and hematoma (bruising) formation at the injury site. This will help decrease the amount of swelling to the injured area. Compression should be maintained throughout the day and if possible throughout the night for the first 72 hours after an acute injury.

Elevation:
Elevation reduces the amount of internal bleeding, by eliminating the effects of gravity of blood pooling in the injured extremity. The greater degree of elevation, the more effective the reduction in swelling, by rule of thumb, the injured extremity should be elevated above the heart.

Any injury if not reported at the time of occurrence, must be reported to Miss Pulver immediately the next school day.

New injuries not reported at the time of injury need to be reported to Miss Pulver during period 3 so that an appointment for evaluation and treatment can be set up during study hall.