Common Soccer Injuries, Prevention, and Treatment

P.R.I.C.E. Treatment Method

**Definition**

**P.** Protect – Protect the injury from further harm by using a brace, splint, immobilizer, or ACE bandage.

**R.** Rest – Rest the injured area by not participating in activities that are painful to perform.

**I.** Ice – Ice the area for 20 minutes every 2 hours. Never use heat because it increases swelling.

**C.** Compression – Compress the swelling using an ACE bandage or compression wrap to limit any further swelling. When wrapping the injured area, start at the furthest point away from the body and move toward the body. Be sure that you are not cutting off circulation.

**E.** Elevate – Elevate the injured area above the heart to pull blood flow away from the injured area.

**Common Injuries**

**Ankle Sprain**
The most common injury in sports is an inversion or lateral ankle sprain. This injury occurs by rolling the ankle over the outside of the foot when planting for a sudden change in direction or landing on an uneven surface. A lateral ankle sprain causes damage to the ligaments just below the bone on the outside of the ankle. In some cases, a pop can be felt or heard by the athlete. Mild sprains require rest, but not necessarily medical treatment (follow the P.R.I.C.E. method). Injuries with persistent swelling, pain or any deformity should be seen by a doctor. Activity should be limited until you can perform sport-specific movements without any pain.

**Groin Strain**
Also known as an adductor strain, this type of strain will be felt on the inside of the thigh and occurs from stretching the leg away from the body too far. Athletes will injure this when they are striking the ball or when changing direction while running. You may find it difficult to bring your leg out to the side away from your body. For mild strains, follow the P.R.I.C.E. method. Athletes with injuries with extreme swelling, severe bruising or a complete tear of the muscle should be seen by a doctor. Activity should be limited until the pain has subsided when performing sport-specific movements.

**Hamstring Strain**
Also known as a hamstring pull, this occurs when the leg is extended beyond the point of flexibility of that individual. It can also occur when making an abrupt stop (known as eccentric strain). Treatment recommendations are the same as a groin strain.

**Quad Contusion**
A quad contusion occurs when a direct blow is taken to the quadriceps (front of the thigh). It is essentially a large, deep bruise that can be extremely painful and sometimes make it difficult to walk. Treatment includes following the P.R.I.C.E. method. An important addition to the P.R.I.C.E.
Knee Injuries
A common injury in soccer is an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) sprain or tear, which occurs when the knee is twisted forcefully or hyper-extended. This often occurs when landing from a jump, changing direction on the field or colliding with another player. Athletes often describe a pop at the time of injury, followed by a significant amount of swelling within a few hours after the injury.

Athletes should seek an orthopedic doctor if pain or swelling persist after P.R.I.C.E. treatment. In addition, bone maturity in younger athletes helps to determine the treatment plan. Injury to an open growth plate requires special consideration by an orthopedic doctor. Training in proper jumping and landing technique may help to prevent this injury.

Knee pain that comes on slowly over time can indicate other problems, such as:

- Patello-femoral Pain Syndrome (runner’s knee) – pain in front of the knee related to muscle and tissue stress around the knee cap: this can be addressed with proper training in physical therapy.
- Osteochondritis Dissecans – a defect in the knee’s cartilage that can become evident over time during repetitive activity such as jumping. Use the P.R.I.C.E. method to treat this condition.
- Activity should be limited until you can perform sport-specific tasks without pain.
- Osgood-Schlatter Disease – stress-related inflammation in a growth center at the front of the knee. The best way to treat this is to ice after any physical activity.

Concussion
Concussion is a brain injury usually caused by a sudden jolt or blow to the head or neck that disrupts normal brain function. For more information regarding concussions, please refer to our concussion flyer.