

Soft tissue injury management

Information for patients

This leaflet will provide you with information and advice on how to manage a soft tissue injury. If you have any questions about your injury, please speak to your GP or physiotherapist.

Healing

Soft tissue injuries normally take up to 6 weeks to heal, but can persist for up to 3 months.

Pain

Pain relief can help manage the discomfort in the short term. Normally painkillers bought from a pharmacist will work. If you have any questions please speak to a pharmacist. You may find it more comfortable to sleep with the injured limb propped up with pillows.

Swelling

There may be some swelling associated with your injury. Swelling can last for 3 to 6 months. The swelling is often worse at the end of the day and elevating it will help.

Gentle compression from a bandage or support may also help swelling, but it is important to ensure this is not too tight and restricting blood flow. Having your limb elevated will also help to reduce swelling at the area.

Management

Follow this guidance to manage your injury:

- **Ice:** a cold pack (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can provide short-term pain relief. Apply this to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every three hours and up to four times a day, ensuring the ice is never in direct contact with the skin. Do not sleep with the cold pack on the affected limb.
- **Bandage or support:** a bandage or support may be useful in the early stages of your injury. This will provide your limb with support and stability. We encourage you to begin weaning yourself off the support after two to three weeks.
- **Relative rest:** reduce activities that are making your symptoms worse, for example, the duration of time you spend on your feet.

Rest

Try to rest your injured arm or leg for the first 24 to 72 hours (one to three days). However, it is important to maintain movement. This should not cause too much pain.

Using your limb

If you have been provided with a support we encourage you to use this for comfort only, but try to wean off this as soon as possible. Otherwise, use your arm or leg as pain allows.

Follow-up

If after six weeks you still have significant pain or have not achieved full movement, then you may benefit from physiotherapy. We recommend you contact your GP to refer you to your local physiotherapy department.

Driving

To return to driving you must be able to perform an emergency stop and ensure your injury does not affect your ability to drive.

Flying

There are no risks with flying following a soft tissue injury. However, if you have had recent surgery or any significant illnesses you should discuss this with your GP.

Smoking

Medical evidence suggests that smoking can prolong the time taken for an injury to heal. It is important that you consider this information with relation to your recent injury. Stopping smoking during the healing phase of your injury will help ensure optimal recovery from this injury.

For advice on stopping smoking and local support available, please visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree or discuss this with your GP.

Sport

If your injured limb is improving and you are hoping to return to sport, we would advise you to gradually return to your previous level of function in a safe and graded way. Specific injury exercises can be found on our other leaflets, for example, Ankle sprain. If you are finding it hard to return to your previous level of activity, talk to your GP about a physiotherapy referral.

If you find your symptoms are not improving, speak with your GP and they may refer you to physiotherapy or another healthcare clinician.

Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve

for you. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 3601

Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

You can also contact us by using our online form at www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.