



First Aid Tips

By David Kent, LMT, NCTMB

Keeping It Simple Series

As a practicing massage therapist, I'm exposed to a variety of clients every day, some of whom suffer from debilitating pain brought on by soft-tissue injury. Sometimes, clients wait weeks, even months, to see me after sustaining a soft-tissue injury because they think that the pain will go away by itself; however, more often than not, by the time they do finally see me for treatment, the pain has progressed to the point that it has impeded on their daily activities.

Depending on the extent of one's soft-

tissue injury, there are steps that can be taken at the time of injury to minimize damage, reduce pain, and help aid in the healing process until the client can make it in for treatment. This article will discuss self-care first aid tips that your clients can apply when they sustain a soft-tissue injury.

Emergencies don't occur every day, but when they do, there are simple and swift actions that can help improve the odds of a speedy recovery. There is no question that your clients will need this information

at some point for either themselves or to help a friend; however, the question is: When they need the information, will they remember what to do?

The answer is yes, and it starts with the acronym **R.I.C.E.**:

Rest the injured region or limb. Pain is the body's way of signaling that something is wrong and needs attention. Rest will prevent further injury by not using the affected muscle(s) or joint(s).

Ice the area as soon as possible after the injury. Cold packs or ice baths will limit swelling. When using ice, be careful not to use it for too long, as this could cause tissue damage.

Compress the area with an elastic wrap or bandage to reduce swelling.

Elevate the injured body part. Elevation works with gravity to help reduce swelling by allowing fluid and blood to drain toward the heart.

However, our clients will only remember the acronym R.I.C.E. and its significance if we, as massage therapists, put into practice another acronym: **R.E.S.T.**

Repetition is necessary if we are to teach our clients about the importance of self-care. Most people need to see and hear the information, as well as perform the task, numerous times before it becomes routine. During my sessions, I ensure that my clients have all the information they need via handouts, books, Web sites, and anything else that I think will be helpful. During follow-up phone calls to the client, I review the actions that I would like them to take to expedite and maintain their recovery.

Education and training are the keys to preventing and treating soft-tissue injuries. Most clients will take appropriate action once they know what to do, when to do it, how to do it and why they are doing it. Whenever possible, I teach using as many senses as possible, including visual, auditory,



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kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory. For example, when I teach a client how to use ice, instead of just talking about it, I demonstrate how to do it so that the client can feel and see the process. Then I allow the client to ask questions as they do it to themselves so they are confident with the process.

Stretching is another useful aid. (Raising your arms and yawning after getting out of bed in the morning doesn't count!) When it comes to stretching, it is very important to describe the reasons why it is important, most notably, for injury prevention. Create a stretching routine for each of your clients depending on his or her physical condition and abilities; then demonstrate how to perform each stretch. Taking photographs while the patient stands in front of a

postural analysis chart is very useful to show clients distortions in their body. This helps clients understand the stresses being placed on their joints and soft tissues.

Topicals can help by creating a cutaneous (skin) distraction, which reduces pain intensity and helps the muscles relax during stretching. I hand out trial samples to my clients for their use, and I use topicals to promote my clinic by asking my clients to give samples to friends, family and coworkers. Topicals like BioFreeze and other devices, such as the TheraBand, can also produce additionalThe educational process empowers clients on many levels. It also elevates your reputation as a highly knowledgeable massage therapist. These self-care skills are practical and will help

clients who have sustained a soft-tissue injury get some instant relief from their pain. Thanks to your first aid tips, your clients will know how to help themselves and others when soft-tissue injuries arise, and they will sing high praises about the therapist who taught them.

Got some great first aid tips? Are you selling a fantastic product in your clinic? Drop me a line and share your tips

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David Kent, LMT, NCTMB, is an international presenter, product innovator and writer. His clinic, Muscular Pain Relief Center, is in Deltona, Florida, where he receives referrals from various healthcare providers. David teaches Human Dissection, Deep Tissue Medical Massage and Practice Building seminars, and has developed a line of products, including the Postural Analysis Grid Chart™, Trigger Point Charts, Muscle Movement Charts, Personalized Essential Office Forms™, and DVD programs. Visit www.KentHealth.com or call (888) 574-5600 for more information.



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