



Injuries within Football.

Football is a sport involving running, kicking and changing direction. It is the most popular sport worldwide with an estimated 240 million participants. Considering these two factors injuries within football do occur. For the average YYL player it may mean an unfortunate few weeks out or missing a local derby, but at the professional level it is estimated they can place a significant financial burden on EPL clubs with up to 75 million pounds lost per season. Therefore it can be seen that correct injury management and where possible prevention programmes are highly beneficial.

An FA audit of English professional clubs found that most injuries required 22 days out of competition. The most common injuries were muscle strains (37%), ligament sprains (19%) or knocks (7%). 33% of all injuries were classified as slight or mild; 45% as moderate and 22% as major. A higher proportion of injuries occurred in preseason probably due to lower levels of conditioning and harder playing grounds.

With regards to common mechanisms of injury, about 20% of injuries were due to running, 15% from being tackled, 10% from implementing a tackle, 8% as a result of directional change and 8% from collisions.

The majority of injuries were in the lower limb (legs) which makes sense considering the sport involves running and kicking. Of these 23% were of the thigh (mainly strains of either the hamstring at the back, and less frequently the quadriceps at the front); 17% knee ligament sprains, 17% ankle ligament sprains, 12% shin injuries and 10% groin injuries.

How to manage an injury in the acute (0-72 hours) phase?

Firstly, if you sustain an injury where you cannot run it off quickly or compete at 100% you are best to come off. There is no point turning what may be only a week or so into a month or longer.

Following this, generally the best principle to follow with any soft tissue injury is the acronym RICER to help reduce pain and swelling as a result of the inflammatory phase of injury.

RICER stands for:

Rest – Reduce activity or rest the injured part. This may mean staying off it for a short period.

Ice – Ice the injured part if possible for 15-20 minutes every 2 hours.

Compression – This may be via a bandage, compression stocking or brace to help minimise swelling.

Elevate – Keep the injured part above the level of the heart to help drain swelling.

Referral – Should the injury not be settling seek medical opinion via your physiotherapist or Dr.

In addition the acronym of **no HARM** should also be followed.

ie: no **H**eat, no **A**lcohol (not a misprint unfortunately), no **R**unning or no **M**assage as all these factors will only increase blood flow and cause more swelling and pain.

Whilst the earlier statistics are largely based on professional athletes, the principles of early injury management are the same whether you are Lionel Messi or the team mascot. So by following these you will help speed up recovery and get you back on the pitch faster.