

Management of Bleeds

Bleeding can be slowed by using First Aid. This can be used for minor bleeds in a joint, soft tissue or muscle. The steps of this First Aid to slow bleeding are called RICE and stands for Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation. RICE is a common treatment used for many types of injuries, including those suffered by professional athletes.



REST

While the joint is bleeding, it should be rested. In the event of an ankle or knee bleed, they should keep off their feet as much as possible and not do any physical activities. They should keep a set of crutches at home to use when a bleed starts. In hemophilia care, the "R" in RICE can also mean "Replacement of clotting factor".



ICE

To help control swelling and reduce pain they should apply ice. They can use crushed ice in a plastic bag or a bag of frozen vegetables, wrapped in a towel. It is very important not to apply the ice for too long. Ten or fifteen minutes at a time, every 2 hours, is long enough. The "I" in RICE can also mean "Immobilization". The joint is held still (immobilized). When there is a lot of swelling, and if movement is difficult and painful, the joint should be immobilized by a half-cast or a splint for short periods only, about 2 or 3 days. If the joint is kept immobilized for longer periods, the joint can become stiff and the muscles can become weak, making the joint more prone to re-injury.



COMPRESSION

They should apply pressure on the area that is bleeding to help 'pinch off' the blood vessels and slow down the bleeding. Compression of a joint or muscle bleed is done by using an elastic bandage (tensor). They should wrap the injured part in a figure-eight pattern. It is important that they watch carefully for coolness, numbness or a change in colour in fingers or toes. If any of these symptoms occur, they should remove the bandage and re-wrap it less tightly. An alternative is a Tubigrip® sleeve. If the injury is very sore, they may find compression increases the pain. If this happens, they should rewrap the injury less tightly, or remove the bandage altogether.



ELEVATION

Placing the injured limb at a level higher than the heart helps decrease the pressure in the blood vessels and helps to slow the bleeding. They can rest their injured arm or leg on pillows.

Find more information on Hemophilia and Hemophilia Resources, visit www.livingwithhemophilia.ca and click on Community Support!

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