# Signs and Symptoms of an Injury

By Alan Edwards & Dustin Bradstreet

During sports, some injuries are immediately evident while others can start as nothing and progressively worsen. Knowing the warning signs of a serious injury and getting treatment can help avoid a serious injury in a young athlete.

Swelling is a definite warning that an injury needs attention. It is usually obvious and can be seen, but there are times that swelling will not have any outward signs. Swelling in a joint may result in pain and stiffness and you might even have a clicking sound or sensation, but not all clicking and popping is harmful to a joint. Get a medical evaluation when the clicking and popping are accompanied by pain.

Sometimes you're not able to move a part of your body as well or extend as far as before. This could be caused by swelling or could be a secondary symptom caused by pain, lack of strength, tendon or bone malalignment, and/or improper body mechanics. To assess if swelling is involved, compare one side of the body with the other. If there is major difference in your range of motion, then you have an injury that needs attention.

Another sign of an injury that needs immediate attention is point tenderness -- that is when you can press one point in a bone, muscle or joint and produce pain. Joint pain should not be ignored. Muscles primarily run the length of the bone, whereas ligaments and tendons usually cross the joint. Joint pain therefore is most likely to reflect problems with tendons, ligaments, and/or cartilage. Keep in mind that although the pain feels like it is in the joint, the problem could be somewhere above or below it.

Weakness in a muscle, bone or joint should be evaluated by comparing strength of one side of the body to the other. An easy way to check for injury is to lift the same weight with both the left and right side and compare the result. If you are unable to lift the same weight, there is a strength difference and you should see a medical professional.

You should never ignore numbness or tingling resulting from an injury. This may be caused by a number of different problems, the most significant being a nerve injury. Always see a physician to evaluate any numbness, tingling, radiating, shooting, or burning nerve pain.

If you have any of the symptoms discussed above, don't let the injury get worse. To fix the problem, you need to find the cause. That means, get a medical evaluation so you can heal the injury and eliminate the pain.

Anytime you or someone you know suffers an acute injury remember R.I.C.E.: Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation.

- Rest the affected area and stop the activity that caused the injury
- Ice the affected area
- Compression wrap the injury with a Ace bandage
- Elevate the area so gravity can assist with swelling control

Never apply heat to an injury. This increases circulation and swelling. Always apply ice for at least the first 72 hours after the injury or until the swelling

is under control. Then get to a physician for a proper diagnosis and further treatment.

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