

# Rehab One, Ltd. Newsletter

## BMH Sports Medicine Center

### First Aid for Muscle Cramps, Strains, and Sprains

#### Muscle Cramps

Muscle cramps can occur any time – during exertion or at rest. Sometimes they're caused by certain medications or dehydrations.

- Have the victim stretch out the affected muscle to counteract the cramp.
- Massage the cramped muscle firmly but gently.
- Apply heat. (Use a heating pad or a hot water bottle wrapped in cloth.) Moist heat is more effective than dry heat. **Do Not** apply direct heat to the skin.
- Get medical help if cramps persist.

#### Muscle Strains

- Muscle strains are commonly known as pulled muscles.
- Apply cold compresses at once. Reapply them for 20 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for the first 24 hours. (**Do Not** apply ice directly to the skin.)
- If the strained muscle is in an arm or leg, elevate the limb to reduce swelling & bleeding within the muscle. Rest the pulled muscle for 24 hours.
- Get medical help if the victim is in great pain or if a body part is not working properly.

#### More on the Subject

If the muscle feels better after 24 hours, apply heat as often as possible for the next 3 to 4 days. **Do Not** apply direct heat to the skin. If the problem has not improved in 24 hours, get medical help.

A strained muscle should not be used as long as it is painful. When it is no longer painful, the victim should return to full activity gradually. If the muscle starts to hurt again, reapply heat and slowly start activity.

#### Sprains

If the victim is severely injured or you suspect a broken bone, call for emergency services. Get medical help if the injured area is misshapen, if the victim is in great pain, if a body part is not working properly, or if there are signs that circulation beyond the injured area has been impaired.

**Do Not** give the victim anything by mouth if you suspect severe injury.

**Do Not** ignore persistent joint pain. A body part that hurts should not be used.

- Remove any clothing or jewelry from around the joint.
- Apply cold compresses at once. Reapply them as often as possible (at least for 20 minutes every 3 to 4 hours) for the first 24 hours. (**Do Not** apply ice directly to the skin.)
- Elevate the affected joint with pillows or clothing. **Do Not** move the injured area for at least 24 hours.
- The victim's physician may recommend an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication (aspirin, ibuprofen) appropriate for the victim's general health.

**Call about our Free Sports Injury Screening (304) 369-5719**