Workouts: The Painful Truth

Should you rest a sore ankle, or can you keep training through a minor injury?

September 3, 2010 By Cristina Gonzalez

“Rest doesn’t mean inactivity,” says Aaron Gewant, a physical therapist at New Jersey’s Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation.

First, take care of your injury, Gewant suggests. Follow the RICE method (rest, ice, compression and elevation) until swelling disappears and pain dissipates.

Once these signs of injury abate, measure your pain. On a scale of zero to 10, with zero equaling no pain and 10 signaling you need to go to the emergency room, your pain should never be above a four, Gewant says. If it is, see a doctor. If it isn’t, it’s time to revise your fitness program and resume exercising.

If you’ve hurt your lower body (knees, joints, ankles), concentrate on low-impact workouts, such as cycling on a stationary bike or rowing on a machine.

If you’ve hurt your upper body (arms), start by mimicking the exercise movement without resistance. If you can move (even with a little bit of tenderness), add 2- to 3-pound weights.

Once you’re able to complete three sets of 10 repetitions without the slightest twinge, ease into your normal workouts.

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