

Pain relief in acute musculoskeletal injuries

Controversy surrounds the early and aggressive use of Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) in the initial post-injury treatment phase of musculoskeletal injuries.

According to some studies, NSAIDs have, at best, a mild effect on relieving symptoms and are potentially harmful to tissue healing (Jones, 1999 & Paoloni, et al, 2005).



Use of NSAIDs decreases the body's inflammation response. This inflammation response is needed for acute injuries because it triggers natural processes which protect the joint from further damage and aid soft tissue healing.

Decreasing inflammation through NSAIDs can increase bleeding at the injury site, slow down muscle regeneration and potentially compromise long-term healing.

Paracetamol is recommended as the first line of pain relief for acute musculoskeletal injuries by several studies. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in Australia also recommends paracetamol as a first step for mild to moderate acute musculoskeletal pain. Only where pain still exists do they advise a NSAID be considered.

Additionally, evidence suggests that paracetamol is just as effective as NSAIDs for the reduction of acute musculoskeletal pain.



The resultant message to trainers is this: don't automatically recommend a NSAID for a sprain or strain due to its anti-inflammatory properties. Based on current evidence, paracetamol should be the first step, with NSAIDs only used in the acute phase if excessive swelling or uncontrolled inflammation exists.

Of course, compression and ice therapies are recommended

<http://www.wakefieldsports.com.au/files/articles/RICERnoHARM.pdf> The safest point of action is to see your experienced sports doctor. Wakefield offers a complete Sports Medicine service and can be contacted on 8232 5833.

Wakefield Sports Clinic: Adelaide, North Adelaide & Mount Barker

References:

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