

# SEAPORT ORTHOPAEDIC ASSOCIATES

## ...BECAUSE YOU HAVE A CHOICE

### How To Tell If Your Injury Is Serious\*

There are some common tip-offs you should recognize as warning signs that you have a ski and snowboarding injury that needs your attention. While some sports injuries are immediately evident, others can creep up slowly and progressively get worse. If you don't pay attention to both types of injuries, chronic problems can develop. The following list of six injury tip-offs comes from *Anybody's Sports Medicine Book*, written by James Garrick, M.D. and Peter Radetsky, Ph.D.

#### 1. Joint Pain

Joint pain, particularly in the joints of the knee, ankle, elbow and wrist, should never be ignored. Because these joints are not covered by muscle, there is rarely a muscular origin. Joint pain that lasts more than 48 hours requires a physician diagnosis.

#### 2. Tenderness At A Specific Point

If you can elicit pain at a specific point in a bone, muscle or joint, by pressing your finger into it, you may have a significant injury. If the same spot on the other side of the body does not produce the same pain, you should probably see a physician

#### 3. Swelling

Swelling is usually quite obvious, and can be seen, but occasionally you may feel swollen without outward signs. Swelling is always a sign of a sports injury and should never be ignored. Often, swelling within a joint will cause pain, stiffness, or may produce a clicking sound as the tendons snap over one another because they have been pushed into a new position due to swelling.

#### 4. Reduced Range Of Motion

If swelling isn't obvious, you can usually find it by checking for a reduced range of motion in a joint. If there is significant swelling within a joint, you will lose range of motion; the limb will only go so far in each direction. Again, compare one side of the body with the other to identify major differences. If there are any, you have an injury that needs attention.

#### 5. Comparative Weakness

Comparing one side to the other for weakness is often hard to do, but can be a good clue to identify significant injury. One way to tell is to lift the same weight with the right and left side and look at the result. Often therapists will test comparative weakness manually or with special equipment.

#### 6. Numbness and Tingling

Never ignore numbness or tingling. Often related to nerve compression, these warning signs may indicate serious injury and should always be seen by a physician.

### I Have One Of The Warning Signs of Injury - What Next?

If you recognize any of the above warning signs of injury the goal is to prevent further damage. *Don't let the problem get any worse and don't let the swelling continue.* Look for an obvious cause of the injury such as poorly fitting equipment or a missed step etc. If you can locate the source of the injury, you can begin to remedy the situation. If you have any of the above warning signs, do not continue your activity. Begin treatment immediately.

The first treatment indicated for any acute injury is reducing any swelling. Swelling causes pain and loss of motion, which in turn will limit use of the muscles. If you don't use the muscles, they will weaken, and shorten and resist repair. The primary treatment for acute sports injury is R.I.C.E.: Rest, ice, compression and elevation. Rest in this case simply means to stop the activity that caused the injury. Compression for an acute injury is the most important immediate treatment. Wrapping the injured body part with an ACE bandage can keep swelling to a minimum.

Never apply heat to an injury. Heat will increase circulation and increases swelling.

### Immediate Treatment For Injury

As a recap, here is what you should do immediately when you sustain a sports injury:

1. Stop the activity immediately.
2. Wrap the injured part in a compression bandage.
3. Apply ice to the injured part (use a bag of crushed ice or a bag of frozen vegetables) for no more than 15 minutes at a time. Let the area warm completely before applying ice again, in order to prevent frostbite.
4. Elevate the injured part to reduce swelling.
5. Get to a physician for a proper diagnosis of any serious injury.

### You have a choice to

- **Have the best medical care possible**
- **See the correct specialist**
- **Be an educated patient**
- **Receive the best treatment available**

**Ski and snowboard season is here, and you have the choice to avoid injury. Whatever you do...**

**DON'T PANIC!**



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