



ASPAH

Australian Society for
Performing Arts Healthcare

Acute Injury Care

Who gets injured?

The answer is “nearly everyone”. Performing artists can be injured during their everyday life, but they can also incur injuries resulting from practicing or performing. Although most of these are minor injuries, performance-specific injury care can minimise their impact on performance and maximise the chances of a speedy and complete recovery. If poorly managed, even a minor injury can become severe, and can even turn into a chronic (long term) problem.

You have injured yourself – What now?

So, despite your best efforts, an “acute” (sudden) injury has occurred! **Now** you can do a lot to assist your body’s recovery. Pain, swelling and heat are important aspects of the body’s protective and healing responses, but you can keep them under control and assist your recovery by applying the **PRICE** and **HARM** principles over the first 48 hours after an injury has occurred.

***Important:** Diagnosis and prompt advice from a Health Professional (HP), such as a General Practitioner, Physiotherapist, or other accredited practitioner, can ensure you limit further damage and enable optimal recovery during the first 48 hours and afterwards.*

In the first 48 hours, use PRICE

Protection – protect and support the injured area to avoid further harm

Relative rest – avoid painful movement until you have advice from a HP

Ice – wrap ice, an ice-pack or similar in a moist cloth and apply for 10-20 mins every 2 hours to relieve pain

Compression – an elastic bandage can help support the injured part and manage swelling

Elevation- elevating the injured area above the heart may help drainage and reduce swelling.

In the first 48 hours, avoid HARM

Heat – may increase tissue bleeding. Avoid heating liniments, hot packs and hot baths

Alcohol – dilates blood vessels and may increase bleeding

Rehearsing/practicing/performing – avoid discomfort until you have advice from a HP

Massaging the injury – can increase inflammation and worsen tissue bleeding.

What about after 48 hours?

If things are improving, your HP may encourage you to gently move the injured area, increasing the movement as tolerable. Depending on the diagnosis, your HP may encourage you to exercise into discomfort but will guide you on how much to tolerate. Maintaining fitness, especially strength and cardiovascular fitness, can encourage recovery as you gradually increasing your load (see ASPAH tip sheet on fitness).

As pain and swelling settle, it may be helpful to start some performance-related activities (e.g short practice sessions), progressing duration and difficulty only as tolerated. Acute injury can also produce shock and stress. Try some relaxation and healing imagery such as mindfulness to reduce the negative effects of stress and focus on healing and return to performance.



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If things are not improving within five days, seek advice from a HP as soon as you can, and avoid practising or performing until you know more about your condition.

Whenever possible, it is advisable to speak to a HP who is familiar with the specific requirements of performing artists in your field. Look for someone in your area in the ASPAAH Members' Directory (see the tab on the ASPAAH home page).

What next?

In most cases your injury will settle rapidly and allow you to make a speedy and safe return to performance using the approach above. However, every injury is unique. Some injuries are slower to heal than others, and it may take you longer than you expected to return to full training and performing. If you are concerned about your injury, seek help from your HP. These professionals are experts in diagnosing and in guiding you through the stages of your rehabilitation back to performance. There are also professionals with the expertise to help you cope with emotional, psychological and other effects of injury. Ask your HP for advice.

Where can I find more information?

Your HP is the best place to start, as each person, each injury and each recovery is unique. Your HP may refer you to other professionals as well. ASPAAH members can search the member list to find health professionals who are aware of the needs of performing artists. See also:

- *An ASPAAH Guide to Australia's Healthcare System*
- *An ASPAAH Guide to Overuse and Chronic Injury Care*
- *An ASPAAH Guide to Understanding Pain*
- *An ASPAAH Guide to Fitness*
- *Explain Pain* 2nd Edition: <http://www.noigroup.com/en/Product/EPBII>
- *Playing Less Hurt: An Injury prevention guide for musicians*. Janet Horvath. 2010
- *Dancer Wellness*. Eds Virginia Wilmerding and Donna Krasnow. 2016

NB: This ASPAAH Guide is intended as an educational resource only and does not replace professional advice. ASPAAH recommends that diagnosis and initial advice is always obtained from an accredited healthcare professional.

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A Guide to Performing Arts Healthcare

ASPAAH is pleased to offer you this Guide which has been compiled by experts in the field. This is an example of ASPAAH's many resources, all designed to inform performers and those who work within the performing arts of current information that may assist their health and wellbeing.

By becoming an ASPAAH member, you will share in exciting new developments in the Australian performing arts healthcare landscape, including:

- A range of health care guides, posters, conference presentation videos and webinar recordings
- Professional listing in ASPAAH's online Directory of Members
- Access to a network of leading performing arts professionals, clinicians and researchers
- Discounted registration for ASPAAH conferences and other events
- Access to Local Chapter events
- Opportunity to run Local Chapter events
- Regular news about local, regional and national performing arts healthcare events
- Full annual subscription to *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*
- Free advertising in ASPAAH bi-monthly e-newsletters
- The right to vote and hold office in the Society

If you work in the performing arts in Australia, ASPAAH is *your* organisation. We encourage you to join our extensive membership of performing arts practitioners and organisations so you can access a wide range of ASPAAH Guides, conference videos, newsletters and events. To join and/or to make a tax-deductible donation, please contact admin@aspah.org.au.

ASPAAH Guides include:

Acute Injury Care

Overuse and Chronic Injury Care

Understanding Pain

Australian's Health System

Safety in the Performing Arts

Healthcare Insurance Options

What Health Professionals Do

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