

Prevention of Injuries in Scottish Country Dancing

By Marguerite Bell

Scottish country dancing is a strenuous activity and, sadly, can cause some injuries. However if we warm up well and stretch before dancing some of those injuries can be prevented. The injuries that may happen are: strains, sprains, fractures, cramps, and shin splints.

1. Strain This affects a muscle or a tendon linking a muscle to a bone. It is caused by a sudden stretch or by repeated overuse

2. Sprain This affects a ligament joining bone to bone and is caused by a sudden trauma, a fall, or a twisting action.

3. Fracture This is a break in bone alignment and is caused by a sudden severe trauma or could be caused by repeated stressful activity i.e. a stress fracture. In Scottish country dancing this is usually a fracture of the metatarsals of the foot.

4. Cramps Leg pain and muscle cramps are common. They can occur while dancing or during the night after an evening of dancing.

5. Shin splints Shin splints are pain in the front of the lower leg. Their cause is unknown but they tend to develop after activities in which the legs are overused e.g. in dancing. We can also injure our shoulders and wrists by poor handling techniques. To read the above one would think that Scottish country dancing is a dangerous activity, but it really isn't. In my years of dancing I have not met anyone who has had a serious injury caused by Scottish country dancing.

The treatment for the majority of injuries is **R.I.C.E.**

R Rest Stop the activity and use the injured part as little as possible

I Ice Apply ice or a cold pack as soon as possible. We keep a cold pack in the freezer in Pleasant Valley Hall. When first injured, apply ice for 15 minutes every hour. After 72 hours, ice 3 times a day for 15 to 30 minutes.

C Compress Apply a tensor bandage firmly, but not tightly, wrapping the injured part to control swelling. We have a first aid kit at each class which contains tensor bandages.

E Elevate Elevate the injured part above body level to allow gravity to drain the swelling. As the pain subsides gentle Range of Motion exercises can be started. Those are done within the limits of pain. This really works well, and if icing is started immediately, you should recover quickly. However if recovery is slow, a physiotherapist should be consulted as physiotherapists use modalities to decrease pain and swelling, and can teach specific exercises for muscles and joints.

REMEMBER, WHEN INJURED USE **R.I.C.E.**

Marguerite