



# Winter's bruised and battered

Winter sports – a fine Kiwi pastime, but one that often results in pain and injuries. According to the latest ACC injury statistics, three winter sports – netball, rugby union and soccer – are in the top five sports with the largest number of new claims. Pharmacies are bound to see their fair share of bruised and battered bodies this winter, the right advice and products are crucial. **Rhonwyn Newson reports.**



Anthony Fong

Between July 2007 and June 2008, injuries from playing rugby resulted in more than \$40,000 worth of claims. The tally for netball injuries was \$11,496, and soccer injuries amounted to \$14,156.

Exercise and massage therapist Anthony Fong, of Auckland's Anthony Fong Fitness, is not surprised at the number of injuries.

"Many people don't realise they need a planned fitness programme to help prevent sporting injuries."

Mr Fong says a lot of "weekend warriors" – those

who partake in sports only occasionally – are particularly at risk of injury because their muscles have not been strengthened properly through an ongoing fitness regime.

## Prevention

As well as adhering to an ongoing sports regime, Mr Fong offers further advice to help prevent against injury.

"Warming up properly is important, but just as important is cooling down after playing sports."

He says cooling down after sports helps strengthen and lengthen the muscle tissue, making muscles stronger for next time.

Strapping can be important; however, Mr Fong believes many athletes mainly have a psychological benefit from strapping, than an actual physical benefit.

"Strapping an area will only help physically for the first 15

to 20 minutes, after that it's really just a psychological aid."

Mr Fong says strapping certainly has its place, but the only way to really strengthen an area is through exercise therapy.

However, after an injury has occurred, sports tape can support tendons and ligaments and can help functional movement of the skeletal structure during exercise.

Customers should be advised to first seek medical or exercise advice before using strapping to prevent further injury.

## Treatment

Muscle and tendon injuries are the most common seen by pharmacists. Muscle strain is usually because of sudden acceleration, deceleration or overbalancing. As the antagonistic muscle stretches, the affected muscle contracts, rupturing muscle fibres.

Torn muscles are usually associated with bleeding into the surrounding tissue, resulting in bruising, swelling and reduced movement. Hamstrings, groin, thigh and calf muscles are particularly prone to tears.

Mr Fong says the RICE method should be used to treat soft tissue injuries. He gives a basic example of a netball player who rolls her ankle. The player needs to:

R – Rest. Stop what she is doing and rest her ankle.

I – Ice. Ice should be applied to the ankle, preferably with something such as strapping gauze in between the ice and the ankle.

"A bag of frozen peas or some cubes of ice rolled up in a tea-towel will also do."

Mr Fong says cooling down the area is important as this will help reduce swelling of the hot, inflamed tissue.

Keep ice on the injury for

20 minutes every two hours for the first 48 hours.

C – Compression. Firm bandaging will reduce bleeding and swelling but Mr Fong warns the strapping should feel comfortable, not too tight that it causes tingling or pain past the bandage.

"The area will probably go numb, but don't worry, you'll live."

The injury should be bandaged between ice treatments.

E – Elevation. No partying for the netball player tonight, Mr Fong says.

The ankle needs to be propped up on cushions, elevated higher than hip level while the player is seated as much as possible in the first 48 hours.

D – Diagnosis. ACC has added Diagnosis as the last step in the RICE method, saying a medical professional should be consulted especially if the pain or swelling gets worse. An accurate diagnosis is needed for proper rehabilitation of moderate to severe injuries.

Mr Fong says oral NSAIDs are useful to reduce pain and encourage healing, but these cannot be used by everyone.

"The pharmacist will be able to check whether an NSAID is appropriate for a customer."

## First-aid kit

Mr Fong says a basic first-aid kit should contain the following:

- Hot/cold packs
- Gauze strapping. This can be used around ice or an ice-pack to provide a barrier between the ice and the skin
- Plasters. Mr Fong recommends plaster that can be cut into shape, as well as the pre-cut boxes of plasters
- Scissors
- Gloves
- Saline solution
- Iodine
- Paracetamol and an oral NSAID.

"Many sports teams now include a spare asthma inhaler in their first aid kits," he says.

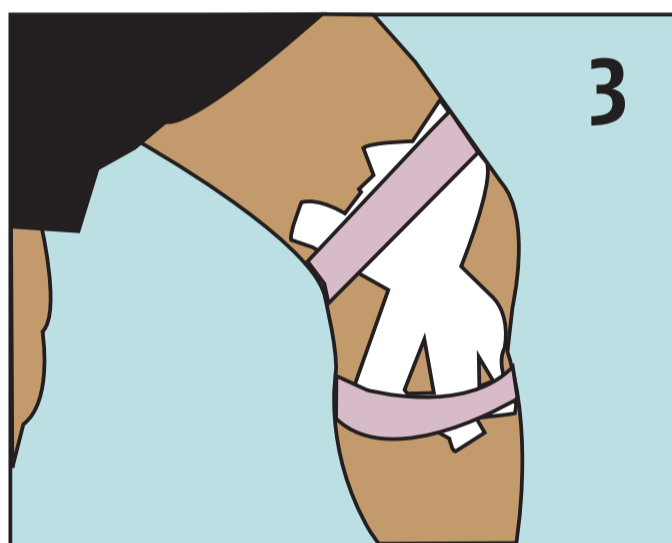
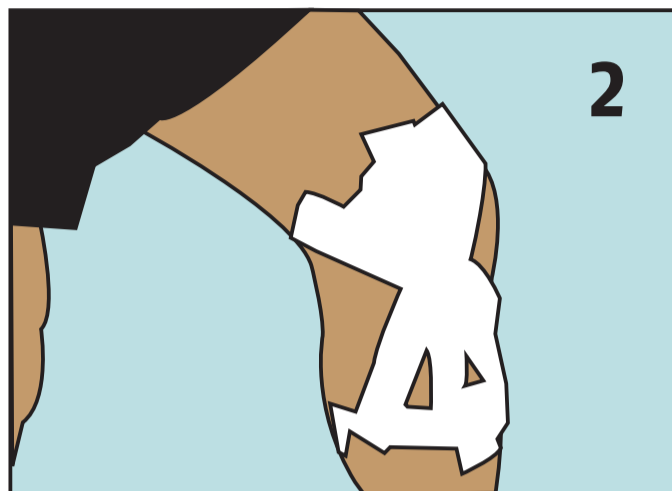
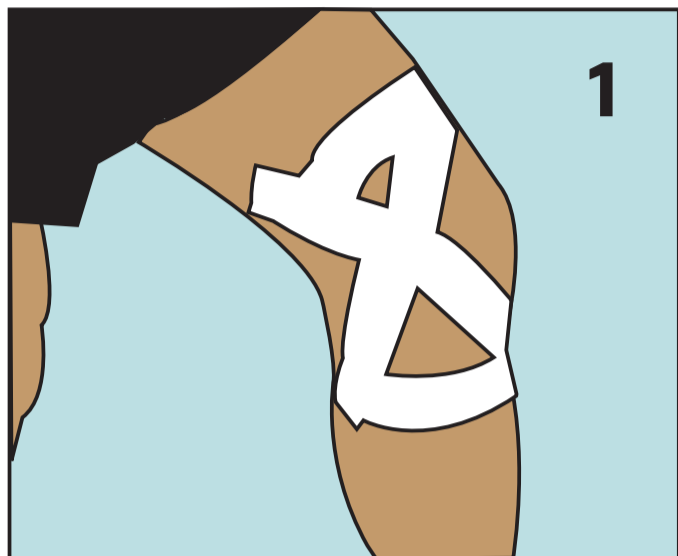
## Customer advice

Make it clear to customers injuries should be given enough time to heal properly, or there is the risk of further injuring the area – sometimes permanently.

Pharmacies are encouraged to develop relationships with local sports clubs.

Sales will increase if club members can purchase products from a designated pharmacy in exchange for a discount. ■

# Strapping important to quick recovery



Knees are susceptible to injury and knowing how to properly strap a knee injury is important during the recovery phase. Exercise and massage therapist Anthony Fong outlines the correct technique to strap a knee.

When the knee is flexed and a force hits the outside of the knee, a medial collateral ligament injury may occur. This is common in contact sports such as rugby league and soccer.

- Form a cross with strips of tape running over the medial side of the knee and connecting to the anchor strips.
- A vertical strip can be applied from the top anchor, through the cross to the bottom anchor.
- Final anchor strips can be placed over the initial anchors above and below the knee to secure the cross and vertical strips.

**Strapping procedure:**

- Apply anchor strips of tape above and below the knee joint, leaving a gap of 3cm at

the back of each anchor.

Mr Fong says, while strapping can support ligament, muscle and joint movement, a flexibility and strength programme should be followed

to provide full recovery from a knee injury. For more information visit website [www.anthonyfongfitness.co.nz](http://www.anthonyfongfitness.co.nz) **RN**

1. Anchor and cross strips
2. Vertical strip
3. Final anchor strips

## ACC and pharmacy preventing injury

Wound management and sports tape and strapping techniques were highlighted as potential areas for future pharmacy case studies, according to a survey undertaken by the Accident Compensation Corporation.



Other areas included when to treat or refer a patient, pain management and medicines interactions. Members of the New Zealand College of Pharmacists participated in an online survey to provide feedback on the two case study exercises – one on ankle sprain and one on back pain – designed by ACC which were released in February 2009. The studies were designed to assist pharmacists to learn about resources available through ACC to help prevent such injuries.

This was the first time ACC released such studies to pharmacists and future studies would only be designed if these proved useful and relevant. ACC says future case studies will be designed taking into account feedback obtained from the survey, as most respondents (82%) found the case study exercises to be either relevant or very relevant. Most also found the exercises clearly laid out and easy to understand. The case study answer book which included commentary from Lynda Bryant and Evan Begg was found to be informative and relevant. On the downside, feedback indicated the timing of the exercises was not appropriate as December is the busiest month of the year. Many also felt it took too long for the results of the case studies to be published. Questions about the case study exercises, the answer book or the survey can be directed to ACC project manager Hans Jorgensen – [hans.jorgensen@acc.co.nz](mailto:hans.jorgensen@acc.co.nz) Pharmacists can request a copy of the book by visiting [www.acc.co.nz](http://www.acc.co.nz) clicking on the "For Providers" tab, and going to the "Publications and Forms" section. **RN**

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