

Controlling Swelling

Rest, ice, compression, elevation

Elevation — the most underused treatment there is

Swelling is fluid that gravity has pulled downwards. Raising the limb lets it drain back. It costs nothing, has no side effects, and works better than most tablets.

- **Raise the limb ABOVE the level of your heart.** An arm resting on your lap is not elevated. A leg on a low stool is not elevated.
- **For a leg:** lie down and prop the whole leg on two or three pillows, with the ankle higher than the knee and the knee higher than the hip.
- **For an arm:** rest it on pillows across your chest when lying, and use a sling when up.
- Aim for **30 minutes at a time, several times a day**, and overnight.
- **Keep moving the fingers or toes** while elevated — muscle movement pumps the fluid away.

COMPRESSION BANDAGE

Apply it from the **toes or fingers upwards**, never from the top down — bandaging downwards traps fluid in the hand or foot.

Each turn should overlap the last by about half, **firm but not tight**. You should be able to slip a finger under the edge.

Loosen it immediately if fingers or toes become blue, cold, numb or more painful.

Remove it at night unless we have told you otherwise.

WHAT IS NORMAL

Swelling after a fracture or an operation can take **three to six months** to fully settle, and is typically worse by evening and better in the morning. Ankle and foot swelling after a leg injury often lasts longest. This is normal healing, not a complication.

TELL US IF

One calf becomes swollen, painful, warm or tight · swelling suddenly increases · the skin becomes shiny, red and hot · there is fever · the limb becomes numb or you cannot move it

Search: swelling, elevation, compression bandage, RICE, oedema after injury

