



PHYSIOTHERAPY: Calf injuries

The calf muscle group consists of the Gastrocnemius, Soleus and Plantaris muscles, situated at the back of the lower leg. Their function is to pull up on the heel bone and these muscles are most active during the push-off when a tennis player has to move quickly to react to an opponent's shot. A strain occurs when the muscle is forcibly stretched beyond its limits and the muscle tissue becomes torn. This frequently occurs when a player attempts to accelerate from a stationary position or lunging forwards.

PREVENTION

- Adequate muscle length by means of stretching is also extremely important. If muscles are tight, there is a higher chance of a muscle strain/tear. Strains/tears can range from a small partial strain whereby minimal pain and minimal loss of function occurs, to a complete rupture, which may require surgery.
- Warm-up is essential in preventing injuries. This increases blood flow and muscle stimulation to allow rapid muscle contractions
- Diet can have an effect on muscle injuries. If a tennis player's diet is high in carbohydrate in the 48 hours before a match there will be an adequate supply of the energy that is necessary for muscle contractions. However, if the muscles become short of fuel, fatigue can set in, especially during long matches. This fatigue can predispose a player to injury. Carbohydrate and fluids can be replenished during matches by taking regular sips of sports drinks between games.



TREATMENT

RICER: Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation and Referral (72hrs)

The aim of this protocol is to reduce bleeding within the muscle.

Many people find that a neoprene calf support provides reassurance following the injury.

RECOVERY

Recovery of the injured muscle can be 1-3weeks/4-6weeks or even 6months depending on severity. The use of manual therapies when you visit your physiotherapist will improve the injury and speed up recovery.

The rehabilitation period involves a gradual stretching program to elongate the scar tissue and progressively increase the muscle strength. Once this has been achieved, the player can begin tennis-specific exercises. To reduce the risk of re-injury, this should be done under the supervision of your physiotherapist.

CONTACT KANDICE GOODWIN (Physiotherapist) 99814099. Narrabeen Sports Medicine Centre Physiotherapy.

