

Using Ice vs. Heat

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EFFECTS OF ICE

(Ice is best used 24 to 72 hrs after an injury occurs. Apply every hour on the hour)

- Decreases inflammation (swelling)
- Decreases muscle spasm
- Decreases pain

EFFECTS OF HEAT

(Heat is best suited for relaxation and with contrast baths)

- Increases circulation
- Promotes physiological relaxation
- Decreases muscle spasm (ice is more effective though)

PROPER ICING TECHNIQUE

- When icing areas that have more muscle or fat tissue, apply ice for up to but not past 20 minutes since frost bite may occur if the ice is left on for longer than 20minutes.
- Areas with less tissue only require 5 to 10 minutes i.e. ankle, skin bone....
- Lie on ice bag (when icing neck or back) or hold the ice bag on with an elastic wrap when icing a joint like the knee or elbow.
- There should be one thin layer between the ice and your skin i.e. paper towel

REAL ICE VS GEL OR CHEMICAL BAGS

- Many chemical gel packs are not as cold as real ice and therefore the cold does not penetrate deep enough to create the anti-inflammatory effects that ice is well known for.
- In other cases however some brands of chemical bags are actually colder than ice and can cause frost bite more easily than real ice. In this case use extra care and add a thicker barrier between your skin and the ice pack.

METHODS OF HEATING

- Exercise is one of the most effective ways to create deep heat.
- Hot tubs and baths are also effective at raising core temperature.
- Heat pads can provide local comfort but provide minimal changes to deep tissues.

HOT/COLD CONTRAST

Contrasting hot and cold helps to move fluids through an area quickly and can be effective at decreasing muscle spasm. A painful back can respond well to a 20-30 minute hot bath followed by 20 minutes of icing.

CHEMICAL HOT AND COLD RUBS/CREAMS

These rubs and creams stimulate sensory receptors on the skin surface which distract pain signals to the brain. When a person works out with these chemical creams on their skin the chemicals are absorbed from the skin and go straight into their blood stream.

Good for temporary pain relief, bad for overall health.

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