

## Hot and Cold Therapies

### Ice

Ice treatment may be used in both the immediate treatment of soft tissue injuries and in later rehabilitation. Ice will:

- Reduce circulation and, therefore, reduce bleeding into the tissues.
- Reduce swelling and temperature
- Reduce muscle spasm and pain

To make an ice pack you can use either:

- A bag of frozen peas (do not eat if they have been defrosted and refrozen!)
- Crushed ice cubes in a plastic bag and wrapped in a damp tea towel
- Frozen gel pack in its sleeve

Apply the ice/cool pack to the area for 15 minutes ONLY

This can be repeated once every hour if necessary.

It is normal for your skin to turn pink due to the increase in circulation but please be aware ice CAN BURN. Check the skin under the ice for intense redness and/or pain. Rest after application as skin sensation and flexibility can be reduced.



#### DO NOT USE ICE IF:

- You have sickle cell anaemia
- You have circulatory problems
- You have reduced sensation
- You are diabetic

### Heat

When an injury is older than 48 hours or on painful stiff joints heat can:

- Improve circulation
- Relax muscles
- Help to reduce pain

Use a hot water bottle or heat pack wrapped in a towel placed over the affected area. You can wrap a scarf around it to hold it in place. You should feel comfortable warmth only. Leave for 15 minutes and repeat as often as you need it.

- Be careful of burns – it shouldn't feel too hot.
- Do not lie on heat
- Check the skin regularly and remove if the skin looks too red



**DO NOT USE HEAT IF:**

You have poor circulation

You have reduced feeling in the area

Your joint is inflamed i.e. It is hot, swollen and tender – heat will make it worse.

If in doubt about the use of ice or heat, consult a health professional such as a doctor or physiotherapist.

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