

HEAT vs. ICE

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If you or your child sustains a soft tissue injury (muscle, ligament, tendon, fascia, nerve) commonly known as a sprain or a strain, or a bone injury, it may be hard to determine which is the best course of treatment. Here are a few tips to follow.

GUIDELINES

In general, cold and hot packs may be applied for 15-20 minute intervals.

Do not apply cold or heat to a desensitized area (e.g., a region that was previously frostbitten, affected by diabetes or nerve injury).

Never sleep on a hot or cold pack. You can get burned by either. After an acute (new) injury, apply ice for the first 24-72 hours.

Benefits of Cold Therapy Reduces pain and swelling. Temporarily reduces local bloodflow. Cold applications are commonly used for management of pain and inflammation from strains / sprains, bursitis, acute arthritis and contusions. **WHEN IN DOUBT-ICE IT.**

Ice Packs / Ice Massage

In order to avoid the sudden cold shock feeling when applying an ice pack, place a towel over the region before applying the ice. **Follow the 20min ON/20min OFF rule.**

Ice massage involves applying ice directly to skin over the injured area. The cooling effect will occur in four stages, referred to as —CBAN—. First, it will feel *cold*, then *burn* a bit, followed by *aching* and finally it becomes *numb*. After the numbness occurs, continue to ice for approximately one minute. The entire process should take approximately 7-15 minutes.

Benefits of Heat Therapy Increases blood flow temporarily. Promotes local muscle relaxation / sedation. Increases muscle flexibility/pliability, cellular activity. Allows larger amounts of oxygen and healing nutrients to the area.

Hot Packs/Wraps

Hot packs are commonly used to relieve pain and stiffness from chronic arthritis and muscle tension. We recommend using moist hot packs, rather than a dry heating pad. Moist heat is less dehydrating to the skin and seems to penetrate deeper than dry heat. **Do not apply heat to an acute (new) injury (under 48 hours).** Although it feels good when applied, heat may increase inflammation, pain, swelling and underlying tissue damage.

The "**RICE**" principle is widely used in treatment of injuries (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation). **Rest** Reduce or stop using the injured area for 48 hours. **Ice** Put an ice pack on the injured area for 20 minutes at a time, 4 to 8 times per day. **Compression** May help reduce the swelling. These include, wraps, braces, air casts and splints. **Elevation** Raise injured area above heart for periods of 5-10 minutes at a time.

ALWAYS CONSULT A DOCTOR IF THERE IS ANY QUESTION

It is important to note that topical lotions (Biofreeze, Prossage, Sombra) do not elicit the same physiological responses as cold and hot packs. These liniments are not substitutes for hot/cold packs.



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