

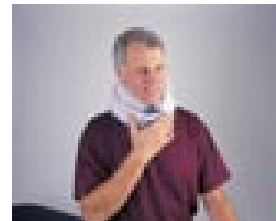
Using Heat and Ice



ICE: Ice packs constrict the blood vessels, causing less blood to stay in an area. This action decreases swelling, numbs the area and reduces pain. Ice also tightens ligaments and decreases muscle spasms. It should be applied if an area is painful to move or swells after exercise.

The best way to use ice is to directly apply an ice pack or bag of crushed ice wrapped in a thin wet towel to the painful area for 15 to 20 minutes every two hours following an injury. For general irritation or overuse, apply an ice pack two or three times a day the affected area. Don't forget to use a towel or several tissues between the ice pack and your skin. If you don't have an ice pack handy, try a bag of frozen vegetables or mix 1 part rubbing alcohol with 2 parts water and freeze.

HEAT: If an injury is in an advanced stage, which is usually after four to five days, heat is recommended. Heat relaxes the local blood vessels, causing more blood to flow to the area. This increased blood supply brings healing cells to the area and takes away cellular waste products. Heat also relaxes areas such as the lower back and shoulders.



Use moist hot towels or microwavable heat packs for 10 to 15 minutes at a time, several times a day. If the heat is too intense, put a layer between the heat source and your skin. The area will become reddened during use, but should return to normal shortly after the heat is removed. Don't ever sleep on a hot pack, especially an electric one.

COMBINATIONS: Typically you use a combination of ice and heat. Maybe, use a hot pack before you exercise or do an activity to help warm up and then ice afterwards. Or use heat when you first wake up to loosen things up before you get going and then use ice before bed. You can also alternate heat and ice. Using a hot pack for 10-15 minutes then ice for 10-15 minutes, you can go through this cycle two or three times; always end with ice.