

COLD & HEAT APPLICATIONS

When do I use COLD?

- acute muscle spasms
- acute sprains and strains
- decrease swelling
- relieve muscle pain by numbing the nerve endings
- headaches
- reduce inflammation
- reduce joint pain

Acute means within the first 24 to 48 hours of onset of pain or injury. Acute injuries follow R.I.C.E. (Rest, Ice, Compress, and Elevate)

What should I use for cold?

- gel packs (kept in freezer)
- frozen hand towels (for compresses)
- bag of frozen peas
- crushed ice in a plastic bag
- bag of un-popped popcorn (kept in freezer)
- frozen juice tin

Always place a barrier (such as a thin towel) between your skin and the cold therapy to prevent tissue damage.

How long should I use cold?

- generally you would apply cold to the area for 10 minutes, then remove for 10 minutes, re-apply for 10 minutes and remove
- apply for 10 to 15 minutes at a time as needed for pain or swelling

Remember, when you use cold on a body part, you are not adding cold. You are removing heat.

People with diabetes, heart conditions, vascular diseases, pregnant women, the very old and very young should use cold therapy with caution. This information should not replace or contradict advice from your doctor.

When do I use HEAT?

- stiff joints
- reduce muscle guarding
- relax muscle spasms
- soften scar tissue
- elongate muscle fibres
- achy, tight muscles
- delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS)
- increase blood flow
- reduce pain
- increase flexibility
- increase range of motion
- non-inflammatory muscle pain

Do not use heat at an acute injury site. Acute means within the first 24 to 48 hours of onset of pain or injury.

What should I use for heat?

- moist hot towels encased in a dry towel
- magic bag
- paraffin wax dipping
- bag half filled with wheat, flax or rice
- hot water bottle
- hot baths

People with heart conditions should not have hot baths.

How long should I use heat?

- until pain subsides
- until flexibility is restored
- until the area is warmed

If the pain worsens when you use heat, then heat is not the right thing to do.

Heat and gentle stretching, used together, decrease pain and spasms and increase range of motion more than heat alone or stretching alone.

People with multiple sclerosis, bleeding disorders, diabetes, heart conditions, vascular diseases, pregnant women, the very old and very young should use heat therapy with caution. This information should not replace or contradict advice from your doctor.