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Cold Therapy

Should I use a cold pack or heat on muscle soreness?

The basic rule is: if you have a fresh injury (overuse or impact) in your muscles or tendons, use cold therapy for the first 48 hours. Keep a flexible ice pack in the freezer, or just grab a bag of frozen peas or corn.



Wrap it in a damp face cloth and apply for 10 minutes, three times a day. The damp cloth allows the cold to penetrate more deeply into your muscles. It is also very important in protecting your skin from getting an "ice burn".

Does it help to apply the cold treatment for a longer time?

When you apply ice treatment to an injury, the reactive swelling (visible or not) is "vacuumed" out of the injured area. After icing, fresh warm blood then flows into the area to restore body temperature, bringing important healing nutrients and oxygen. Applying ice therapy 3 separate short times is more effective than one long session.

Moist Heat Therapy

Why do I have to wait 2 days after an injury before I apply heat?

If heat is applied too soon after an injury, it may:

- Aggravate swelling in the area
- Cause more pain in the injury afterwards
- Restrict movement in the joint afterwards
- Reduce circulation and slow healing due to additional blood being added to an already swollen area.

What are the positive effects of heat?

Use moist heat to relax stiff, tired or aching muscles effectively, and relieve stress held in muscles.

- Blood vessels dilate, allowing increased blood flow into the muscles - bringing oxygen and much needed nutrients.
- Muscles relax in the area, reducing pain by easing pressure on nerves.
- Greater range of motion is available to muscles and joints treated with heat.

Heat can be applied to small areas with a microwavable rice pack or an electric hot pad. Soaking in a hot bath or hot tub is a comfortable and relaxing way to apply moist heat to all your muscles.

When your whole body is immersed in hot water, your central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) becomes calm, relaxed and peaceful.

Hot/Cold Contrast Therapy - The Best of Both!

If you want to aggressively speed up the healing process, use ice only for 48 hours, then start Contrast Therapy. Contrasting 10 minutes of cold, followed by 10 minutes of heat, then 10 minutes of cold, can speed up the healing process nicely - and use the benefits of both



Deb has enjoyed soaking in her hot tub almost every day for the past 7 years!

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heat and cold. Cold therapy clears the "highway" to allow maximum amounts of fresh blood to be pumped into the sore area by the heat application.

There is a synergistic effect to contrast therapy as well... muscles release their tightness when "surprised" by adjusting to sudden changes in temperature.

If you like to soak in a bath or hot tub for your heat therapy, just ice your specific injuries before and after your soak.



Make a Hot Rice Pack

Make a quick and easy microwavable hot pack with a sock and some rice. Pour about 2 cups of uncooked rice into a sock. Knot the end of the sock. Microwave for a minute and check for a comfortable heat. Microwave another 30 seconds if needed and check again. Apply to tight muscles. This pack can be reused indefinitely. Try it behind your neck when you are tired or have sore upper shoulders! Rice packs generate their own moisture which adds heat penetration into the muscles.

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