



# Heat or Ice?

## Heat

### What does it do?

Heat therapy opens blood vessels, which increases blood flow, relaxes muscles and helps alleviate pain.

### When to use it?

Heat is a great way to help loosen stiff joints or tight muscles. It is also a good method of pain relief for tension headaches and other chronic conditions. Always wait 48-72 hours after an injury before considering heat therapy. When in doubt, use ice.

### Safety Tips

- Treat for no longer than 20 minutes at a time.
- Wait 1 hour between heat treatments.
- Do not apply heat directly to the skin. Use a thick towel between the head and the skin.
- Do not lie on hot packs to avoid potentially burning yourself.
- Do not use heat if you have no feeling in the affected body part.
- Never use heat if there is swelling or bruising.
- Do not use heat if you have poor circulation, such as with diabetes.

## Cold/Ice

### What does it do?

Cold therapy slows down the blood flow to an injury, which reduces swelling, inflammation and pain.

### When to use it?

Cold should be used right after an injury or after activity that aggravates a chronic condition. Cold is good for migraine headaches, bumps, sprains and strains that may occur with physical activity, slips and falls or lifting. Cold therapy may also be beneficial for minor burns by applying cold water from the faucet. When in doubt use cold/ice.

### Safety Tips

- Treat for no longer than 20 minutes at a time.
- Wait 1 hour between heat treatments.
- Do not apply ice/cold directly to the skin. Use a thick towel between the head and the skin.
- During treatment, check the skin every 5 minutes to make sure there is no skin damage, such as a freeze burn.