



Ice or Heat for an Injury?

What is the difference?

- **Ice** decreases blood flow
- **Ice** decreases inflammation
- **Ice** blocks pain by numbing
- **Heat** increases blood flow
- **Heat** increases the elasticity of tissue
- **Heat** decreases stiffness
- **Heat** relaxes muscles
- **Heat** promotes healing

When should ice be used?

- Immediately after an injury
- After competition on an injured area
- After rehabilitation exercises for an injured area
- When there is pain or swelling after activity

When should heat be used?

- Before competition for tight muscles, provided the injury is not in the acute stage (first 3-4 days) and is not swollen
- Before stretching exercises for tight muscles

Ways to ice an injury:

Ice Bucket/Bath:

- Use for limbs
- Immerse 10-15 minutes, every 2 hours
- Cover fingers/toes with a curled up sock to insulate

Ice Cup Massage:

- Use for muscles, smooth areas
- Apply 5-10 minutes, every 2 hours
- Use continuous, circular motion
- Do not hold ice in one place

Ice Bags:

- Use for larger or bony areas
- Apply 15-20 minutes, every 2 hours
- Can use a bag of frozen vegetables
- Place a damp cloth (not saturated) between body part and the ice
- Use a LIGHTLY wrapped ace wrap to hold the ice bag in place



Precautions about ice:

- The first time you apply ice will feel uncomfortable but following applications will be more tolerable.
- Some gel cold packs get colder than ice and can cause cold burns. Use a protective barrier.
- For sensitive skin, use a cloth between the ice and skin, BUT DO NOT DAMPEN IT.
- NEVER ice directly over the eyes or genitals.
- Stop using ice if you experience tingling or burning in the fingers/toes that are not in contact with the ice. (Ex: Icing your elbow and you feel tingling in your fingers)
- Do not ice over areas that have decreased sensation due to injury/illness.
- Do not use ice if you are allergic to ice (welts, rashes appear).

Four stages of cold:

1. Cold
2. Burn
3. Ache
4. Numb

NOTE: You should try and leave the ice on until you reach stage 4.

Ways to heat an injury:

- **Heating Pad:** 20 minutes
- **Warm Shower:** 20 minutes
- **Commercial Heat Packs:** 20 minutes, though some commercial heat wraps can be used up to 8 hours (Ex: Thermacare®)
- **Hot Tubs:** 20 minutes

Precautions about heat:

- When heating, you should feel “warmth” not “hot.” If a heating pad or hot packs are too hot, you can get burned.
- Being in a hot shower or hot tub/whirlpool for too long may cause you to become dizzy and/or nauseated and pass out.
- You should never sit in hot tubs/whirlpools without other people being present.

Note of caution: People with diabetes, circulation problems, nerve problems and those on certain medications should consult their physician prior to the use of ice or heat.

The information presented should not be considered medical advice or treatment, nor should it replace a physician consultation. For more information about any of our programs or services, or to receive a physician referral, please visit www.summahealth.org.

For an appointment with one of our sports health physicians, please call

1-888-7-SUMMA-SPORT

(888-778-6627)

Same day/next day physician appointments offered:

- **Summa St. Thomas Hospital**
20 Olive Street, Suite 201, Akron, OH 44310
- **Barberton**
201 Fifth Street NE, Suite 14, Barberton, OH 44203
- **Summa Health Center at Green**
3838 Massillon Road, Suite 350A, Uniontown, OH 44685
- **Summa Health Center at Western Reserve**
5655 Hudson Drive, Suite 315, Hudson, OH 44236
- **Robinson Health Center at Streetsboro**
9318 State Rt. 14, Streetsboro, OH 44241
- **Summa Health Center at Lake Medina**
3780 Medina Road, Suite 240, Streetsboro, OH 44241

Sports rehab and physical therapy:

- Summa Rehab Services at University Park YMCA:
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- Summa Rehab Services at Western Reserve:
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