

Application of Ice and Heat

COLD PACKS

Purpose

Cold packs are used to reduce swelling, reduce inflammation and decrease muscle pain intensity.

Precautions

Damp towels will make the cold feel much more intense. A dry towel will cool more gradually. Your skin will become pink and slightly numb from the cold. The skin rewarms due to increased circulation in about 30-60 minutes after the cold is removed.

Procedure

Remove clothing from the area to be treated.

- Place towel over area to be treated;
- Place cold pack over towel;
- Cover the rest of your body with a blanket or warm clothing to avoid getting chilled;
- Sit or lie in a position that allows you to relax and be as comfortable as possible.

If there is swelling present, elevate the area above the level of your heart, if possible.

Keep the cold pack in place for no longer than 20 minutes.

MOIST HEAT

Purpose

Hot packs help to relax tense muscles and to sedate nerves. The heat improves circulation of blood and nutrients to the injured area.

Precautions

Do not sleep on a heating pad. Serious burns may occur. Avoid lying on top of the hot pack. The weight of your body greatly increased heat transfer. Do not use heat over cuts, burns, infections, recent surgeries or areas where you cannot sense heat. Use extra layers of towel over bony areas. Check your skin frequently to see if hot spots are developing. Damp towel will increase the intensity of the heat.

Procedure

Remove clothing from the area to be treated.

Wrap hot water bottle in warm, damp towel or in a dry towel.

-OR-

Apply a warm damp towel between the heating pad and the area being treated.

Sit or lie in a position that allows you to relax and be as comfortable as possible

Keep the heating pad in place while it cools down.

ICE AND MOIST HEAT

Purpose

Alternating heat and cold (ice) creates a vascular flush. This means that after ice constricts blood vessels, heat expands them and causes blood to flow more readily into the injured area. This type of therapy is believed to enhance the healing of injuries such as muscular strains or tendinitis.

Precautions

There are certain diseases or conditions where alternating heat and cold can worsen a person's condition. Alternating ice and heat should not be used for patients who have rheumatoid arthritis, Raynaud's Syndrome, cold allergic conditions, paralysis, or areas of impaired sensation. Moreover, diabetics, pregnant woman and people with high blood pressure or heart conditions should consult their physician before using ice and heat.

Procedure

- Apply Ice to the affected area, as previously described, for 10 minutes;
- Apply Moist Heat to the affected area, as described, for 10 minutes;
- Continuously alternate Ice and Moist Heat in 10 min intervals for one hour.