

September, 2019

Paragon Orthopedic Center
Grants Pass, Oregon



Should I use **Ice** or **Heat**?

The weather is changing and so do our activities, which sometimes invite an injury. Maybe your exercise routine moves inside, or a new team sport begins. If you experience a sprain or sore muscles, do you know the best temperature to expedite healing? Ice is what you should use for an acute injury. It works by reducing blood flow to the area by constricting your blood vessels. The reduced blood flow will decrease the inflammation and nerve sensitivity, and thus the pain. Sources of cold therapy:

- Ice baths
- Ice packs
- Cooling sprays and gels

Never apply anything frozen directly to the skin; always have a barrier, such as a towel that is thin enough to allow the cold to reach your skin. Keep the cold therapy brief, about 10-15 minutes. You don't want to damage your skin or nerves, so keep the therapy brief. You should apply ice several times a day for short intervals.

Heat is a good choice of therapy for pain several days after the initial injury. Once the inflammation is gone, you no longer need ice to reduce the injured area, so you should increase circulation. Heat works by relaxing the muscles, increasing blood flow to the area, and promoting healing. Sources of heat therapy:

- Heat wraps, warmed in microwave or boiling water
- Electric heating pads
- Steamed towels or towels soaked in hot water and wrung out thoroughly
- Warm baths

Certain conditions shouldn't use heat therapy. Speak to your doctor before using any temperature therapy if you have the following:

- Vascular diseases
- Diabetes
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Deep Vein Thrombosis

Using heat or cold therapy can significantly reduce your pain and expedite healing if used correctly. When in doubt, or if you feel you aren't getting the expected results, call your health care provider for specific guidance. Paragon Orthopedics is available to take questions and make an appointment for you to be seen: 541-472-0603. Or read more at <http://www.paragonorthopedic.com/>

The following articles were referenced for this newsletter:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/chronic-pain/treating-pain-with-heat-and-cold#cold-therapy>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tendinitis/expert-answers/tendinitis/faq-20057872>