

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE USE OF HEAT AND COLD

ICE – application of cold (i.e. some source of frozen material) should never be to the bare skin but rather through a thin layer of cloth such as a T-shirt or tea towel. Application should be for twenty (20) minutes exactly, as certain physiologic effects happen during the first fifteen minutes and different effects happen during the last five minutes. A minimum of thirty (30) minutes should be left between applications. Acute (recent) injuries such as joint sprains are amenable to several applications per day. Acute neck and/or back pain can be treated three to four times per day. Sources of cold can be frozen gel packs which stay soft once frozen (best), frozen peas, corn or popcorn (good), or crushed ice and water in an appropriate leak proof container (poor).

HEAT – Do not use heat on acute (recent) injuries that show signs of inflammation (redness, heat, swelling, etc.) since application of heat will cause more inflammation and pain.

- application of heat is best accomplished with a source of moisture on the bare skin. A wet and well-squeezed wash cloth works well here. Sources of heat can be a heated gel pack or hot water bottle. **No electric heating pads.** Care must be taken that the source of heat is not too hot as one could be scalded. A good rule of thumb is to hold the heat source on your fingertips. If you can tolerate its presence without wanting to toss it in the air, then it is probably not too hot. Application of a heat source with wet cloth is twenty (20) minutes, with a minimum of thirty (30) minutes between applications.

HOT & COLD – the same rules apply here as for both above. Treatment should always start and finish with ice (i.e. ice – heat – ice – heat – ice, etc.)