

## Heat or Ice?

I'm often asked by patients whether they should put heat or ice on an injury. Both as age old remedies that help with pain. Which is more effect? When should I use which? What is the best way to use it?

	<b>HEAT</b>	<b>ICE</b>
<b>What effect does it have on the body?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opens blood vessels</li> <li>• Increases blood flow</li> <li>• Brings more nutrients and oxygen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constricts blood vessels</li> <li>• Decreases blood flow</li> <li>• Decreases inflammatory response</li> <li>• Reduce pain signals</li> </ul>
<b>When should I use it?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use heat once an injury has healed. This is usually when the swelling has gone down and there is no more bruising e.g. on a hamstring strain that has healed but feels tight. In this case heat is generally used before activity.</li> <li>• Use heat on chronic (ongoing) muscle spasms e.g. muscle spasm in neck or shoulder after hours of computer work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use ice on acute (sudden) injuries e.g. ankle sprain</li> <li>• Use ice on injuries that have inflammatory component e.g. shin splints or tendinitis.</li> <li>• In these types of injuries ice should be used immediately after activity or injury.</li> <li>• <b>Note:</b> Osteoarthritis is a tricky one as though it has an inflammatory component using ice can make the joint feel stiff. Some people with Osteoarthritis may prefer heat for pain relief</li> </ul>
<b>How should I use it?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for 5min, off for 5min, apply for 5min for total of 20min application.</li> <li>• I prefer this as it means you allow the area to recover between applications so it doesn't "over heat".</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for 5min, off for 5min, apply for 5min for total of 20min application.</li> <li>• I prefer this as it means you allow the area to recover between applications and ensures you don't make the area too cold.</li> </ul>
<b>Important rules to follow for both treatments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't apply heat or ice directly on the skin</li> <li>• Make sure you skin is able to tolerate the heat or cold. If it's too hot you could blister the skin. If it's too cold you can get frostbite in the area. Remember some areas on your body are more sensitive than others e.g. sole of your foot vs. inside thigh.</li> <li>• Only keep the ice of for the recommended time</li> <li>• If ice or heat does not significantly change your pain you should consult a medical practitioner.</li> </ul>	

*\*Written by Jeanne Matthis Biokineticist*