



When to Ice or Heat an Injury

Promote effective healing by knowing if ice or heat is best and when to apply.

Ice:

- Ice is used to decrease the inflammation present at the site of an injury or area where overuse trauma is occurring.
- Ice should be used for the first 72 hours following injury and as long as swelling is present or reoccurring at the site of injury. Additionally, ice should be used after practices or games.
- Ice should be applied for 20 minutes with a break of at least one hour before reapplication.
- Crushed ice is most effective at cooling injured areas as it will conform to the contours of the body. If cubed ice is used, make sure to reposition the ice as needed to continue icing the desired area. Commercial ice packs should never be put directly on skin! Use a paper towel or thin fabric. A bucket of ice water may be the most effective for cooling feet, ankles, hands and wrists.

Heat:

- Heat is used in the treatment of injury once the initial swelling has subsided. Heat aids in increasing blood flow to the area to aid in decreased stiffness and pain.
- Heat should be applied to the area for 15-20 minutes and used as needed. It is important to avoid overheating or burning the skin by adding toweling between the hot pack and the skin as needed.
- Application of heat is most appropriate prior to practice or competition but should not replace an appropriate warm-up.



**Orthopedics and
Sports Medicine**

OrlandoHealth.com