

# HEAT vs ICE

A guide to hot and cold treatment options from Marshfield Clinic & Shine<sup>365</sup>.

HEAT

## HEATING PAD

Use on strains  
example: hamstring

**Goal:** Stretch the muscle.

**Instructions:** Apply heat for 5-10 minutes to increase blood flow to the muscle. Avoid any open wounds and put a barrier between the heating pad and your leg.

**Variation:** Apply heat 5-10 minutes, stretch; then apply heat another 5-10 minutes. Continue this rotation to ease into stretching.

## HOT WATER BOTTLE

Use on larger muscle mass  
example: quads, upper thigh

**Goal:** Increase movement with less pain.

**Instructions:** Apply heat for 5-10 minutes. Moist heat penetrates deeper, making it more effective on large muscles.

**Alternative:** A hot tub or whirlpool is a moist heat option that can target more large muscle areas at once.

ICE

## ICE VARIATIONS

Use on sprains  
example: ankle

**Goal:** Reduce swelling and control pain.

**Variations:**

- **Ice bag** – Consists of ice cubes in a plastic bag. Put on body part for 20 minutes.
- **Slush bath** – In a bucket or tub, combine ice and water. Submerge ankle/foot for 10-15 minutes. This is especially good for treating the entire joint.
- **Ice cup massage** – Freeze water in a cup. Massage cup over the area for 10-12 minutes.
- **Commercial ice pack** – Rub on injury for no more than 20 minutes. To prevent frostbite, place barrier between ice pack and joint.

**Warning:** Do not apply ice treatments for more than 20 minutes. Be sure the area goes numb; this is all you need. Then, remove the ice. Watch for skin to return completely back to normal before reapplying.

## COOLING CREAM

Use on areas of pain  
example: shoulder or back

**Goal:** Provide temporary relief.

**Instructions:** Cooling creams minimally enter the skin. They create more of a cooling sensation than actually going into the muscle tissue. Apply the topical cream as directed. As with other hot or cold treatments, avoid open wounds.

Source: Marshfield Clinic



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