

Ice vs. Heat

Benefits of Ice:

- Helps to reduce swelling/inflammation
- Decreases pain
- Reduces muscle cramping and spasms
- Calms chronic injuries AFTER exercise

Benefits of Heat:

- Improves compliance of soft tissue
- Increases circulation
- Warms up stiff or scarred soft tissue before stretching and exercises
- Reduces stiffness

When to Use Each:

- **ICE:**
 - With Acute Injuries (within the last 48 hours)
 - Ice is a vasoconstrictor which causes the blood vessels to narrow which, in turn, helps to reduce swelling and inflammation to the area.
 - As the muscle starts to warm back up, the blood vessels expand and new blood comes rushing in to stimulate the healing process.
 - AFTER any exercise
 - Overuse or chronic injuries can be iced AFTER exercise to help prevent swelling and inflammation to the injured area.
 - How Often:
 - Ice can be applied for 10-15 minutes every couple of hours.
 - Always make sure the area you are icing is back to normal temperature before applying ice again.
- **HEAT:**
 - With Chronic Injuries (overuse or old injuries)
 - Heat can be used when there is NO swelling or inflammation present. Swelling is caused by bleeding in the tissue. Heat draws more blood to the area and in turn would cause more swelling.
 - BEFORE Exercise
 - Heat before exercising can help to relax tight muscles.
 - It increases the elasticity of connective tissues and stimulates blood flow.
 - How Often:
 - Apply heat for 10-15 minutes before exercising.
 - Make sure to add layers under the heat so it does not burn the skin.