

Hot or Cold?

I am often asked, "When should I use heat and when should I use cold after an injury?" Conventional wisdom says to use cold on an injury only in the first 24 hours after the injury. In fact, many doctors are still saying to use heat in the beginning, without qualifying how it should be used or why. Many research studies have been done on this subject. The results make it necessary to explain the principles of the use of heat and cold in relation to injuries or other inflammatory processes.

In the first period of time after an injury, inflammation can be a serious problem causing pain and swelling at unacceptable levels. Initially, the best way to respond is with a cold pack at the site of the injury. A Gel Pack is the best way to do this, with a thin layer of cloth between your skin and the pack. Do this for no more than 10-15 minutes—usually as long as the gel pack remains cold—several times a day or as directed by your doctor of chiropractic. If you have circulation problems, it is important to tell your doctor. Anti-inflammatory medicines do not discriminate between the site of injury and other areas of the body, plus they stress the liver as well. The cold-pack works only at the site of injury. Cold is helpful whenever you feel heat or warmth at the injury site. Since it is very easy to reinjure an acute trauma, the one day rule is often inadequate.

Heat on the other hand helps to improve circulation to areas that have begun healing and to help relax surrounding muscles near the injury. If it feels stiff without sharp or hot pain, then use MOIST heat for 10-12 minutes each application. A hot wet towel folded several times and placed over the area can really help. In the beginning, you can take a very hot shower to relax the muscles around an injury and finish up with the cold-pack on the spot.

When circumstances do not allow repeated applications of heat or cold remember there are a number of very useful natural approaches to inflammation. Under the direction of a nutritionist Bromelain, Glycyrrhiza, Omega 3 fatty acids, vitamin C, and a number of other natural agents have been shown in research to decrease the inflammatory response without side effects, while at the same time improving inflammatory conditions naturally.

Remember:

Use Cold when injury is warm or hot—Cool it down

Use Heat when it's Stiff and needs to be softened.

Always be moderate: 10-15 minutes

—NEVER SLEEP ON HEAT—

**This information made available by Dr. Stephen Green
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