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**100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment**  
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**Which to Use When: Ice or Heat?**

**By Louise Roach**

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Knee pain after running? Wake up with a backache? Twist an ankle?

When aches, pain, strains or swelling take place due to an injury or chronic condition, what is the best course of action: ice or heat? Many people automatically assume heat will ease their discomfort. Think again!

Ice and heat have opposite effects when dealing with inflammation and pain. Both are useful when applied at the correct stage of an injury. Ice constricts blood vessels and decreases blood flow to an injured area, therefore reducing inflammation. It also numbs pain. Heat increases local blood circulation and relaxes tight muscles. When is it appropriate to use each?

**The Acute Injury Stage:**

Immediately after an injury occurs, inflammation and swelling takes place due to damaged soft tissues and broken blood vessels which leak blood into the affected area. This is considered the acute stage of an injury and lasts about 48 to 72 hours. Pain, stiffness, bruising and tissue tenderness are symptoms of the acute stage. Ice should always be used immediately following an injury because it constricts blood vessels, which will lessen swelling, as well as numb pain and control bleeding. Apply ice no more than 20 minutes at a time. Always protect skin from tissue damage by using a cover over the ice pack. Allow the skin to return to normal temperature before reapplying ice. Heat should not be used during the acute stage. It will increase blood leakage, which increases swelling and possibly pain. Most professionals agree that icing an acute injury will facilitate healing. Applying heat may actually slow healing during the first 72 hours after an injury takes place.

**The Chronic Injury Stage:**

## Which to Use When: Ice or Heat?

This is normally the point at which inflammation decreases, approximately 72 hours after the injury. Pain and stiffness may still be present. At this point, both ice and heat can be used to assist in healing. Use ice to control pain and to help with inflammation that might occur after working the injured area, such as a sore knee after running. Use heat to relieve muscle tightness or joint stiffness. Heat is also helpful before a workout to increase blood flow to the injury and warm up the affected area. When applying heat, use moist warmth. Never use a heating device that is too hot nor sleep on a heating pad, which may result in burns. Apply heat only for 20-minute intervals, using the same general guidelines as ice.

### An Easy Guide for Ice and Heat:

#### When to Use Ice:

During Acute Stage (48 to 72 hours immediately after an injury) To decrease swelling and inflammation To numb pain To decrease muscle spasms To treat an acute burn

During Chronic Stage (after inflammation subsides, usually 4 or 5 days after injury) To manage pain and possible swelling After an activity or workout involving an overuse injury to decrease pain and swelling To treat joint swelling due to inflammatory arthritis

#### When to Use Heat:

During Chronic Stage (after inflammation subsides, usually 4 or 5 days after injury) To warm up stiff joints and aid in joint mobility To decrease chronic muscle spasms To aid in stretching tight muscles Before an activity or workout involving an overuse injury to warm up the affected area

Disclaimer: This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical treatment or consultation. Always consult with your physician in the event of a serious injury.

Louise Roach is the editor of on-line health and fitness newsletter, NewsFlash\*SnowPack. She has been instrumental in the development of SnowPack, a patented cold therapy that exhibits the same qualities as ice. Her injury prevention and treatment articles have been published on health and fitness websites. For more information visit:

. Visit our free health newsletter at:

### **Is Heat or Ice Better for Arthritis Pain?**

**By Stephanie E. Siegrist, MD**

You probably know that applying heat or ice to a painful joint can help relieve pain, but have questions about these simple techniques. Which one? Why? How often? How long?

The only time you must choose "ice" is during the first 48 hours after a sudden injury or surgery.

## Which to Use When: Ice or Heat?

Cooling the area causes the nearby blood vessels to constrict; there is less swelling, so there is less pain. Heat opens up the area's blood vessels, improving the flow. Increased circulation brings oxygen and healing elements to the scene, while flushing away wastes: in with the good, out with the bad.

Use your ice/heat pack as often as you'd like; at least three times a day. Heat before activity warms up the joints, and ice afterward cools the inflammation from the friction in arthritic joints. Most packs can be frozen or heated; buy two. Keep one in the freezer, pop one in the microwave when you need it.

When trying to find relief from your daily arthritis pain, you can't go wrong by experimenting here! Choose a large ice/heat pack that is pliable enough to cover and conform to your painful joint. Try it for 20 minutes (check your skin every 5 minutes!) If you feel better, then you've made the right choice! If not, try the other.

Take notes on what works. Make good use of low-tech, low-cost, low-risk, common-sense health habits that pay off in many ways!

Want to learn more? Visit

to order "Making Sense of Arthritis Medicine:

Manage Your Symptoms Safely" and discover relief that's right for you!

Stephanie E. Siegrist, MD is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon in her 10th year of practice, and author of "Making Sense of Arthritis Medicine." She's one of only 3% of U.S. orthopedic surgeons who are women! Dr. Siegrist strives to bridge the gaps that exist in today's doctor-patient relationship with "Information Therapy!" Complete information about Dr. Siegrist, and the book, are available from her website

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