

Icing Techniques

If Dr. Sharon has told you to use ice, it will be one of the techniques outlined below. This is for your reference.

For the first 48 hours after a fall, bang, bump, sprain, bruise... the general rule is to apply ice. If there is swelling in the tissue from trauma ice is generally better than using heat because heat can aggravate swelling.

If you don't have a specific therapeutic ice pack, a bag of frozen dried beans or un-popped popcorn work well. You want the ice pack to conform to your body shape and not get hard on re-freezing like a bag of vegetables would. Some ice cubes and a bit of water in a sealable watertight container also work.

If your freezer is VERY cold, put a thin cloth or piece of paper towel around it. No need or desire to get freezer burn on your skin!

Depending on the nature of the injury or body part involved different icing techniques can be used. Here are 3 common methods.

1. ON & OFF (great for backs, necks, headaches....)

Put the ice pack on the injured body part for a set amount of time and then take the ice off for an amount of time. Don't just leave the ice on.

- A. First method: Ice on for 15 -20 minutes then off for a full hour to allow the tissue to come back up to normal temperature. Repeat as desired.
- B. Second method: Ice on for 15 – 20 minutes then off for 15- 20 minutes. Repeat as desired.

2. ICE MASSAGE (Great for tendon or ligament issues, for example 'tennis elbow')

Get an ice cube and either put it in a small plastic bag or wrap one end in a tissue so you can hold it.

The ice will melt quickly so I suggest you have a towel handy. You are going to literally massage the injured part along the direction of the part you are icing. For example, with the 'tennis elbow' you massage up and down the length of the sore tendon insertion at the elbow.

If I told you to do this technique, I would have shown you where and the direction to massage.

3. ALTERNATING ICE AND HEAT (Use with a sprain of a wrist or ankle AFTER the first 48 hours)

This technique can establish a flushing action to help reduce swelling but it is best used after the tissue has done some healing.

- A. Get 2 clean bowls or buckets that will fit the body part (usually hand/wrist or foot/ankle) and fill one with water and ice. Fill the second one with hot (not burning!) water. Start by dipping the body part in the ice bucket for 1 minute then plunge it into the hot water for one minute. Repeat the alternating dipping for about 30 minutes. Finish with 3 minutes in the cold.
- B. Same idea and process as with the bowls/buckets of cold and hot water but if the body part won't fit in the container, we have to get a bit creative. Use a few ice packs for the cold and for the heat, use a source of moist heat (for example, hot wet wrung out cloths or a hot water bottle).