



YOUR GUIDE TO

# HOT & COLD THERAPY

MUSCULOSKELETAL

## Introduction

The use of hot and cold modalities is the oldest form of treatment for injuries, and it is still widely used and encouraged by medical professionals today.

The advantage of this type of treatment is that it is easy to use, non-invasive, non-addictive, has very few side effects, and can save you the cost of seeing a therapist!

Whether to use hot or cold, or both, is dependent on the nature and cause of the injury. It is important to understand your injury, to avoid using your pack inappropriately.

### HELPFUL HINTS

The cold and heat packs are easy to use, and an instruction guide can be found with your pack.

Do not apply hot or cold directly onto your skin, but rather wrap the pack in a towel or something similar to prevent burning.

## Cold therapy

The **RICE** principle is used extensively for any acute injuries involving swelling. It is cheap, easy to use and most importantly, extremely effective. It helps to minimize pain, and reduce swelling in the area.

Using ice can greatly improve recovery time for acute injuries, and should be followed immediately after you have sustained a soft tissue injury (within the first 24-48 hours).



<b>REST</b>	Stop using the injured area. Allow your injured region to rest from weight bearing, or any activity that brings on symptoms, for approximately 24 hours after the injury. You can move the area, but make sure that it is pain free to prevent any further damage
<b>ICE</b>	Ice the area every 2 hours for 15- 20 minutes to decrease pain and swelling for the first 48-72 hours
<b>COMPRESSION</b>	Apply pressure to the area in the form of a stocking, tight sock, brace, strapping or bandage to provide both support and pressure to decrease any swelling
<b>ELEVATION</b>	Keep the injured area raised. Elevate the area ideally higher than your heart, to reduce swelling and pain

## Heat therapy

Heat therapy is a universal treatment used for pain and discomfort. It encourages blood flow to the targeted area, which brings oxygen and nutrients to the tissue and removes cell waste.

The warmth in the area decreases muscle spasm, relaxes tense muscles, relieves pain, and can increase range of motion.

Heat can be useful in chronic injuries of the neck, back, low back, and pelvic area, as an easy and effective method of pain-relief without common side effects of medication.



<b>WHEN NOT TO USE HEAT</b>
In the first 24hrs after an injury, as it increases the blood flow to the area and will increase the swelling and slow the healing process
If you have a diagnosed pathology (such as a slipped disc)
If you have a diagnosed inflammatory condition (such as Arthritis), as it can aggravate the affected area
If there is any swelling present

## Using both therapies



Combining hot and cold can have a greater effect than using just one in isolation. Use them in combination when you are suffering from acute pain, if your painkillers are not working. It can be useful before you go to bed, or upon waking, to reduce the effects of pain on your sleep or daily activities.

**Start and finish using the cold pack. Apply each on the affected area for 5 minutes, and leave for 15 minutes before repeating. Repeat 2-3 times.**

This method of treatment acts as a pump, where the cold takes the blood away from the area, and the heat brings fresh blood back to the area. This helps to improve the circulation of the blood flow to and from the area.

## Contact us

This guide is designed to assist you in the self-management of your injury/condition.

We are here to assist your recovery in the shortest but safest possible time. If you have any uncertainties or queries regarding the information, please do not hesitate to contact us on:

Phone 017890400999 / 07870166861  
[www.mdphysiotherapy.co.uk](http://www.mdphysiotherapy.co.uk)