



## **“IS HOT OR COLD BETTER FOR THOSE ACHES AND PAINS?”**

The application of something as simple as an ice pack or hot water bottle can help reduce the impact of an injury very quickly and if done correctly could save you a visit to your Physiotherapist or Doctor.

But when should you apply it?

### **Ice packs and cold compresses**

The ideal time to apply ice or cold to an injury is immediately after an injury. Any injury that has caused pain or bruising is likely to result in inflammation developing. Something that is inflamed will be painful, it may look red or bruised and will be swollen. This is a sign of tissue injury and is a normal response of the body to help with healing.

An ice pack should be used intermittently on the affected area for the following 72 hours. The effect of the cold is to limit the blood flow into the area and so slow down the rate of cell death in the injured tissue. This will then reduce how severe the inflammatory reaction is.

Crushed ice cubes or a bag of frozen peas are ideal because they can be moulded around the painful part. Always wrap this in a damp tea towel and then apply it to the part for 10-15 minutes. Never put the ice straight on the skin as this may cause an ice burn. Then wrap a dry towel around the body part and elevate it.

### **Hot water bottles and heat pads**

Heat is best applied to problems that involve feelings of stiffness or tightness. Heat should not be applied to an acute injury because it may increase blood flow to the area and so exacerbate the inflammation.

The effect of heat is to relax the muscles around the area and so allow more movement.

Heat pads should be left in place for 15-20 minutes and it is a good idea to then stretch the part if you have been shown how to do this. For bad backs or necks it is better to avoid lying in a hot bath for long periods as this is a poor posture to adopt, try lying on your back with a heat pad under your neck or lower back.

### **Sam Wilde**

MCSP SRP

*Specialist Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist*

If any problems persist or you are at all concerned about an injury then it is imperative that you seek medical attention immediately to be advised in greater depth. If you have any specific questions regarding your injury please contact us on **0870 2000 878** or [reception@puresportsmed.com](mailto:reception@puresportsmed.com)

#### **Clinics at:**

Point West, 116 Cromwell Road  
Kensington, London.

The Lodge, Parkside Hospital  
53 Parkside, Wimbledon, London.