

Ice Therapy Protocols

1. Length of application: 10 minutes minimum and 30 maximum.

- A. 10 minutes: cervical spine (neck), elbow, wrist, hand, shin, ankle and foot.
- B. 15 minutes: thoracic spine (mid back), shoulder and knee.
- C. 30 minutes: lumbar spine (low back), pelvis, hip and thigh.

2. Frequency of applications

- A. Minimum: 4 times per day.
- B. Maximum: Every hour.

3. Other Procedures you may try

A. Ice massage:

- 1. Freeze water in a small paper or styrofoam cup.
- 2. After water is frozen, peel off the edge of the cup and gently and carefully rub the edges of the ice to eliminate sharp edges.
- 3. Apply ice to area to be treated, smoothly and slowly moving ice in circular or back and forth motions.
- 4. Continue ice massage 5-7 minutes.
- 5. The feeling will be initial cold, then burning, then aching, then numbness. When the area is numb it is time to stop.
- 6. It is normal for the area to appear red after the treatment. In general, rub gently in a peripheral direction (away from the heart. **Keep ice moving to prevent frostbite injury.**

B. Compression: Try to compress the painful area between ice applications.

After icing the area, try wrapping the area with an Ace Wrap or a brace for support. This is only for the extremities, and not neck or back problems.

C. Ice Compression For Necks and Backs: You can also try to compress the ice to the low back by laying down on the ice pack in your bed or the floor, or when seated, place the ice pack between the back and the seat-back. For the neck, lay down and put the ice pack on a pillow, then lay down on the ice pack.



TIPS:

- **CAUTION! DO NOT APPLY ICE PACKS DIRECTLY ON SKIN!**
- If you purchase a gel ice pack, place gel ice pack in freezer for about 2 hours prior to use.
- To make the application more comfortable, put wet a thin rag with hot water, and wrap that around the ice pack. When you apply the ice, it won't be a shock, and the ice will slowly cool off the hot wet rag.
- Follow the above times unless directed otherwise. If you keep ice on the area too long, you may get just the opposite effect of what we are trying to do and make your condition worse.
- If the pain levels on a numerical pain scale rating (0 is no pain, and 10 is bed bound) is a 4/10 or higher, use ice. If the pain is not so bad, use alternating ice/moist heat, or just moist heat. If you have a flare-up during the time you are using heat, go BACK to using ice for a while.
- Be very careful if you are diabetic.
- Try to gently compress ice pack to painful site, i.e., for back pain, lay down on the ice pack with the knees bent so that the ice will get deeper into the tissues. With the neck, try to put the ice pack on a pillow and lay down on it.
- **How To Make Your Own Cold Pack:** 1) Pour 3 cups of water in a zip lock bag. 2) Add 1 cup of isopropyl alcohol. 3) Mix contents. 4) Close bag and place in another bag and close the second bag. 5) Place in freezer. Contents should turn into a slushy mixture. If it is too solid, add more alcohol. If it is too watery, add water.