

Ice Therapy for Injuries

Why Use Ice Therapy?

Ice therapy (cryotherapy) helps **reduce pain, swelling, and inflammation** after an injury. It is most effective in the first **24-72 hours** following sprains, strains, bruises, or post-surgical recovery.

Benefits of Ice Therapy

- ✓ **Reduces swelling and inflammation**
- ✓ **Numbs pain and discomfort**
- ✓ **Lowers tissue damage after an injury**
- ✓ **Speeds up healing when used correctly**

When to Use Ice Therapy

Acute injuries (sprains, strains, fractures, bruises)

Swelling after surgery

Tendonitis or bursitis flare-ups

Muscle soreness after exercise

Do NOT use ice if you have:

- ⚠ **Poor circulation or nerve damage** (e.g., diabetes, Raynaud's disease)
- ⚠ **Frostbite or already numb skin**
- ⚠ **Open wounds** (unless directed by a doctor)

How to Apply Ice Therapy

Standard Ice Pack Method

- ✓ Use **a cold pack, bag of ice, or frozen peas wrapped in a towel** (never apply ice directly to the skin).
- ✓ Apply for **15-20 minutes at a time**.
- ✓ Repeat **every 2-3 hours** for the first **48-72 hours** after an injury.
- ✓ **Elevate the injured area** above heart level to reduce swelling.

Ice Massage (For Small Areas & Tendonitis)

- ✓ Freeze water in a paper cup, peel back the top, and **rub directly over the injury in circular motions**.
- ✓ Apply for **5-10 minutes**, then stop to prevent frostbite.

Cold Water Immersion (For Hands or Feet)

- ✓ Soak the affected area in **cold water (50-59°F)** for **10-15 minutes**.

Precautions

- ⚠ **Never apply ice for longer than 20 minutes** - It can cause frostbite or skin damage.
- ⚠ **Wait at least 1 hour between icing sessions** to prevent tissue damage.
- ⚠ **If skin becomes numb, red, or painful, stop immediately.**

When to Stop Ice Therapy

- ✓ After **48-72 hours**, when swelling subsides, **switch to heat therapy** (warm packs or gentle movement) to promote healing.
- ✓ If pain worsens or does not improve after 72 hours, seek medical attention.

Bottom Line

- ✓ **Use ice therapy for swelling and pain relief** in the first 48-72 hours.
- ✓ **Limit application to 15-20 minutes per session** to prevent damage.
- ✓ **Elevate the injured area** while icing for best results.
- ✓ **Switch to heat therapy after swelling decreases** to improve healing.

Click here for more orthopedic patient information.

Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.