



“Heat versus Ice”

-By Michele Ruppert

Heat versus Ice

Should I use ice or heat for injuries?

This has been a popular question this month. Therefore, I thought I would provide some clarification of when to use ice and heat. What is listed below is what is typically prescribed when injuries occur. However, use your instinct as to what you think is best for you. As always, be sure you are drinking, at least, half your body weight in ounces, daily. Drinking water alleviates pain, prevents injuries, and more!



When to use ice?

Ice is used when there is swelling and inflammation to control pain. Here are situations to use ice:

- 1) If you are injured within the past 48 hours, like muscle or joint strains and sprains.
- 2) If you exercise for extended periods of time (over an hour or more). This would apply to people training for races and who recreationally exercise for long durations (long hikes, bike rides, etc.).
- 3) If you haven't exercised in awhile, then do a sudden burst of exercise like “you did back in the day” and are suddenly sore within 12-24 hours after the “exercise” event. This situation can include doing too much all at once; for example, getting on a roll and cleaning out the garage in one day or doing anything strenuous and you are “so sore” from doing the activity.
- 4) If you experience pain from a chronic condition, always ice AFTER the activity, NEVER before! A chronic condition refers to any overuse syndromes, repetitive strain injury, or cumulative trauma disorder. When to use ice:
 - a. If you have a condition that ends in “-itis”, like bursitis, tendonitis, etc.
 - b. If you been diagnosed with a syndrome, like carpal/tarsal tunnel syndrome.
 - c. If you have shin splints, stress fractures, and golfer/tennis elbow.

When to use heat?

Heat should be used on chronic conditions BEFORE participating in activities (see section 4) above). Heat helps relax and loosen connective tissue and helps to stimulate blood flow.

For how long?

Apply ice or heat up to 15-20 minutes only. Wait 45 minutes to an hour between treatments.

People who live near cold water can take advantage of their lakes and oceans! For people living in California, take a walk into the ocean with your exercise clothes on! I do this often after long hikes and runs, and people look at me like I'm crazy, but I feel so much better!

Michele Ruppert is a retired Naval Officer with over 20 years experience and two graduate degrees in Information Technology. Since retiring from the Navy, she received her Associate of Science degree in Holistic Health in 2007 from the International Professional School of Bodywork (IPSB). She is a certified and licensed Holistic Health Practitioner specializing in advanced therapeutic and medicinal massage and bodywork, which include Structural Integration, the Rossiter System Workout, Traditional Thailand (Thai) massage, and Neuromuscular Therapy. These massage-bodywork specializations are all taught at IPSB and many of the massage modalities are offered at the IPSB Massage Therapy Center.

