

USING ICE AT HOME

Ice is useful for treating new soft tissue injuries and relieving inflammation when joints and tissues are hot, swollen, and painful.

By cooling the tissues appropriately, ice will:

- reduce pain
- reduce local blood flow
- reduce local metabolism
- reduce swelling.

The best skin temperature reduction can be gained within 10 minutes of cooling but the deeper tissues will take longer to cool down.

Do not use ice if:

- you know you have circulation problems or poor skin condition
- you have reduced feeling in the area you wish to treat
- you know you have an allergic reaction to ice
- the area you wish to treat is very bony.

The standard method of using ice is:

- rub a little oil, such as olive oil or baby oil, over the area where the ice pack will go. If the skin is broken or there are stitches in place, do not cover in oil, but protect the area with a plastic bag to stop it getting wet
- place a clean damp cloth or tea towel over the oil/plastic bag
- place a bag of frozen peas or similar on the damp towel, mould them around the area, and wrap the entire area in a dry towel
- check the colour of the skin after 5 minutes. If it is bright pink/red, remove the pack. If it is not, then replace the pack for a further 5-10 minutes
- ice can be left on for 20 to 30 minutes but there is little benefit to be gained by leaving it on for longer. There is a risk of damage to the skin if it is left on longer than 30 minutes
- this process can be repeated every 2-3 hours on a new injury, or 2-3 times a day on an older injury
- you may reuse the bag of frozen peas as an ice pack, but these must be labelled so that they are not used for cooking.

Ice can burn or cause frostbite if the skin is not protected with oil or other protection such as a damp cloth.

Ice cube massage

This is used for small areas of swelling or tenderness:

- hold an ice cube in a kitchen towel or cloth
- gently massage the affected area with the ice cube until it has melted
- towel dry.

For further information, please contact the Physiotherapy Department:

Bassetlaw Hospital 01909 500990 ext 2302
 01909 502302 direct dial

Doncaster Royal Infirmary 01302 366666 ext 3135 or 3585
 01302 553135 direct dial

Montagu Hospital 01709 321126 ext 5626

Retford Hospital 01777 863400