

Chatting with The Good Dr. Laura Shook
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To ice or to heat that, is the question. If you read no further, then read this: **USE ICE ON A NEW INJURY.** Do not give yourself frostbite.

There, if you need to leave now, please do so. If you are going to stick around and read the rest of the article, cool (literally and figuratively).

Let's say for a moment that you have damaged your body. Not the kind of damage where bones are sticking out or body fluids are leaking. I mean the kind of damage where muscles, tendons and ligaments have been stressed beyond their happy place. Something like a sprained ankle, twisted elbow or wrenched knee. Maybe your body has been whipped about during a fall or collision. Or perhaps your wrists are sore from pulling weeds or your elbow from swinging a hammer. Ouch! My Riverside neighbors put ice on that owie.

For at least the first 24 hours and for up to 48 hours after an injury to a muscle or joint, apply ice to reduce inflammation, swelling and pain. During the first 24 hours the use of heat on an injury can increase the inflammation. Remember: (Inflamed) = (on fire), more fire or heat can increase the pain and swelling, making the injury worse. Whereas the worst thing 5-20 minutes of ice will do is make a cold spot. OK, yes you can give yourself frostbite so follow these instructions and **DO NOT GIVE YOUR SELF-FROSTBITE.** .

Using ice therapeutically

Use crushed ice in a Ziploc bag, a bag of frozen peas or a freeze-able gel-filled cold pack that stays somewhat flexible after freezing.

1) Wrap ice pack in a cloth or paper towel. 2) Apply ice to area of recent strain or sprain. 3) Sit in a comfortable position; you may need to use a towel or elastic wrap to hold the ice pack in place. 4) Leave ice pack on injured body part for 10 to 20 minutes. Smaller body parts (wrist or ankle) take less time than big body parts (back or shoulder). 5) Repeat every hour.

First it will be cold. Then it will sting and burn. Then it will hurt a lot and you'll want to take it off but **DON'T**. Wait just a little bit. When the cold area is numb, take off the ice-pack. It is after the skin becomes numb that frostbite can occur.

Do not use ice therapeutically if you have bad circulation, diabetes or lack of feeling in the body part to be iced. You must be able to feel the cold to know when it has become numb to know when to take the ice off.

For information on ice baths or "Dr. Laura's special water torture" (he he he) call or email my office.

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