

Chatting with the Good Dr. Laura Shook
May 2010

Spring is here and the days are warming up. Oh sure this is Kansas so we may yet have a blizzard and most certainly we'll have some wind and hail. But for the most part the days are getting warmer and soon it will be hot. Let us review a few summer safety tips.

- 1) Wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher when working or exercising outside during the day. Especially in the summer heat it is important to find a balance between the mood elevating, vitamin D producing benefits of sunshine and the heat exhaustion-sunburn-skin cancerous consequences of too much exposure to the sun.
- 2) When ever possible exercise or garden in the morning when it is cooler. Learn to identify the signs of heat exhaustion (heavy sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea or vomiting) and heat stroke (Initial profuse sweating then hot dry red skin, fever, vomiting, confusion, seizures and unconsciousness). For heat exhaustion get out of the heat, drink cool non-alcoholic beverages, take a cool shower and rest in an air-conditioned environment. For heat stroke, seek emergency medical help and get out of the heat.
- 3) Drink plenty of water, 8 - 10 8oz glasses (or more) each day.
- 4) Remember this when packing lunch or a picnic, (Mayonnaise) + (Heat) = (Food Poisoning). Using a cooler or insulated lunch bag with an ice pack will help keep foods cool.

Ice can also be used as first-aid on sprains and strains. 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. Remember, (inflamed) = (on fire). Adding heat (more fire) to an already inflamed body part can increase the pain and swelling and possibly make the injury worse.

The worse thing 5-20 minutes of ice will do is make a cold spot. OK, you can give your self frostbite. Follow these simple instructions to maximize the healing benefits of ice and minimize the risk of frost bite.

IMPORTANT, 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 ice to know when to take it off.

Using ice therapeutically

Use crushed ice in a zip lock bag or a freeze-able gel filled cold pack that stays somewhat flexible after freezing. A bag of frozen veggies works well also. Eat the veggies right away don't refreeze to eat later.

- 1) Wrap the ice pack in towel, cloth or paper towel.
- 2) Apply to area of recent strain or sprain.
- 3) Sit in a comfortable position; you may need to use a towel to hold cold pack in place.
- 4) Leave on injured body part for 5-20 minutes. Smaller body parts (wrist or ankle) take less time then 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, it will hurt a lot and you'll want to take it off - don't - wait just a little bit. Then the cold area will become numb. Take the ice pack off when the part being iced goes numb. It is after the numb phase that frost bite occurs Repeat, **DO NOT** give yourself frostbite, which would be a bad thing.

Contact me for more information on using ice therapeutically or for a description of "Dr. Laura's special water torture" (he he he).

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