

Cold packs and ice massage

Cold packs and ice massage are used to help after injuries such as sprains, strains and bruises. They are most often used for the first 2 to 7 days after an injury.

What are cold packs?

Cold packs help reduce pain and swelling. They can be used after an injury or after stretching and exercise (therapy). A cold pack is used for larger areas.

How are cold packs used?

1. Use bags of frozen peas or corn, or a bag of crushed ice. You can reuse these items as an ice pack. **Do not eat** the corn or peas once they have been used as an ice pack.
2. Put a towel between skin and bag. If you put the ice pack directly on the skin, it may cause frost bite. Put the bag on the sore area.
3. Leave on for 15 to 20 minutes.

How is ice massage done?

Ice massage is used for a small area. To make an ice cup:

1. Fill a small paper or styrofoam cup 2/3 full of water and freeze it.
2. When frozen, peel off the top of the cup so the ice is showing.

To massage the area:

1. Rub the ice in small circles over the area that hurts.
2. Keep the ice moving for 3 to 4 minutes until the spot is numb.
3. Throw the ice and cup away when you are done.

Repeat every 1 to 2 hours until the pain and swelling are gone.



Other helpful information

- Cold packs and ice massage may cause your child to feel intense cold, stinging, burning, aching and finally, numbness. This is normal.
- Signs and symptoms of allergic reaction to cold:
 - Itching
 - Swelling
 - Skin rash
 - Joint pain
 - Fainting
- **Do not let your child rest or sleep on top of ice packs as it may cause frostbite.**

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or therapist if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.