

SELF HELP FOR COMMON ACHES & PAINS

ALWAYS SEE YOUR DOCTOR FIRST TO MAKE SURE YOUR SELF HELP STRATEGY IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR CONDITION.

THE 3 PRIMARY SELF HELP STRATEGIES

1. ICE Place ice in a zip lock bag, squeeze all the air out and seal. Wrap the ice bag in a moist hand towel and place directly over painful area. Use the ice pack for at least 20 minutes. You can repeat as often as every hour. Make sure your doctor says ice is appropriate for YOU.

2. HEAT Use a moist heating pad on low to medium, never on high. Place over injured area for at least 20 minutes. You may repeat as often as once each hour. Make sure your doctor says heat is appropriate for YOU.

Other forms of heat therapy include paraffin baths and hydrotherapy. Paraffin baths consist of heated mineral oil and paraffin wax. Very useful for sore joints in wrist/hands and ankles/feet. Hydrotherapy is simply the use of a heated whirlpool either in your own bathtub or at a spa. Very useful for larger areas of the body such as shoulders, back and hips.

Alternate Heat and Ice: You can alternate the ice packs with hot packs for the same 20 minute intervals. Don't alternate ice and heat during the first 2 days following injury.

3. STRETCHING

There are many ways to stretch including yoga, use of golf or tennis balls, deep muscle massage and trigger point therapy. Stretching can make the healing time considerably shorter and can help you to avoid injuries in the future. Very importantly: Make sure your doctor says that stretching is appropriate for YOU.

WHEN TO USE ICE, HEAT OR STRETCHING

1. **ICE** Use ice if your injury has just occurred. Don't put heat on a fresh injury. Icing should take place for the first 2 days following injury. After 2 days you can begin alternating ice and heat.

Use ice also if you have a chronic ache or pain that has suddenly flared up, such as a sore knee or shoulder. After the area begins to settle down, go to alternating ice and heat, then eventually to just heat.
2. **HEAT** Use heat if your injury is an old one that has troubled you months to years, such as an arthritic knee. If the sore area has a flare up, use ice for a few days then go back to heat.

3. STRETCHING

This form of Self Help is vital for helping you return to and maintain good joint and muscle health. The problem is most people avoid stretching because it requires effort, yet it is the number one most important Self Help Strategy. Stretching of an injured joint can begin almost immediately following the onset of pain. First use light massage followed later by deeper muscle massage, then muscle stripping and finally actual stretching of the tissues. These forms of stretching will help reduce swelling, increase blood flow and get rid of pooled old blood from internal bleeding at the site of injury. Chronic painful joints and muscle can be stretched anytime and should be stretched especially when the area is feeling better such as when you are having a "good day" with your chronic arthritis or tendonitis.

VERY IMPORTANT

When stretching you should feel pull, not pain in the troubled area. If swelling, redness and soreness suddenly become worse, stop stretching and begin ice.

AS ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOUR DOCTOR SAYS THAT YOUR SELF HELP STRATEGY IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOU.