

Ice, Ice, Baby!

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Why is it that every health professional or anyone related to the medical field says, "you need to ice" when you have any type of injury or surgery? Well, I know you want me to say they are all going overboard, but the truth of the matter is, it is IMPORTANT! Yes, I am another health professional who is going to tell you to ice those pains and injuries. However, I will explain why!

Let's look at the process that occurs with an injury:

- a. Pain (Nerve impulses) receptors are triggered anytime there is an injury to skin, muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, organs, and/or bones.
- b. Inflammation (Edema) occurs when any tissue (muscle, tendon, blood vessels, etc.) are stretched, torn, and/or ruptured. During this inflammatory process your circulatory system (blood flow) and physiological systems (healing process) work to decrease pain and heal the injured area.
- c. Physiological (Healing) process is the inner workings of your body and its capabilities to heal itself using the circulatory system and different types of cells. In recent studies, during the healing process, it has been found that certain aspects (cells/antibodies) of the physiological system actually can do more damage to the surrounding tissue. This is a major reason to begin cryotherapy (ICE) treatments immediately, and continue for the next 48-72 hours.
- d. Psychological (Mental) sometimes is referred to as pain tolerance. Everyone has his/her own pain tolerance. Usually, the best method is to help calm and relax the individual who has the pain and/or injury.

Now we are back to the old saying, "you need to I.C.E (Ice, Compression, and Elevation) your injury for 15-20 minutes at least 2-3 times daily for the next 48-72 hours or more." This will help reduce each one of the four processes listed above. This is what I would tell my athletes at St. Francis High School. Then I would mention a few methods of icing.

Types of icing:

- a. Ice Cube Method: Place enough ice cubes in a plastic bag, add some water to the bag, and place it above and below the injury site. It may be necessary to use two bags of ice and water.
- b. Gel Pack Method: Buy a couple of re-freezable ice packs, wrap them in a towel, and place the gel packs above and below the injury site.
- c. Peas or Corn Method: This method is inexpensive and allows you to form the frozen peas or corn around the injured site and re-use the peas or corn until the bags go bad. Helpful hint: It might not be a good idea to eat the veggies!
- d. Dixie Cup Method: Generally used for shin splint-like injuries and/or injuries which require a massage. Just fill the cups about 3/4 full with water and freeze. Tear off approximately 3/4 of the top of the cup, hold the bottom of the cup and ice, and rub along the injured area.

In conclusion, icing will decrease pain and inflammation, and will positively influence the healing process. Remember, the next time you are icing and complaining of the cold, wait 5 minutes for the nerves to become numb, watch a movie, and relax on me!