

Cold Therapy

Patient Information

MSK Therapy

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This leaflet is to be used following assessment by a Chartered Physiotherapist who will determine if this treatment is appropriate and safe for you to use.

The term cold therapy includes the use of ice packs or cold compresses.

Benefits of using cold therapy

- Cold therapy can help reduce swelling following an injury or after surgery
- It can also help reduce pain

Risks of cold therapy

- Tissue damage due to ice burns
- Alteration in blood pressure
- Infection if skin is broken
- Increase in pain
- Inhibit muscle activity

Alternatives to cold therapy

None that is suitable for home use.

Why use cold therapy?

- To reduce swelling following an injury or surgery
- To help reduce pain

When should I not use cold therapy?

- If you develop any broken skin in the area to be treated
- If it increases your pain
- If you do not fully understand how to apply the treatment
- If you have a circulatory or sensory problem

How do I apply the treatment?

Ice Packs

- Use a bag of frozen peas or a flexible ice pack wrapped in a damp towel.
- Make sure the skin is free from oils or creams.
- Apply to the affected area as directed by your physiotherapist.
- Leave in situ for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Avoid the full weight of the limb on the cold pack as this may increase the likelihood of a burn.

Cold Compress

Occasionally your physiotherapist may advise this as an alternative to ice packs. The same precautions and procedures apply as for the use of ice packs:

- Fill a bucket/bowl with a mixture of water and ice cubes.
- Use a small folded towel or facecloth (depending on the area) submerge it in the ice water mixture and apply to the affected area.

Other cold therapy options

- Cryotherapy cuff/sleeve: follow the manufacturer's instructions for application.

After application of ice/cold compresses

If you notice blistering or redness which does not go away, please contact your physiotherapist for advice. If it is outside normal working hours contact your GP or Accident and Emergency.

Contacts

Physiotherapy Department
Wrightington Hospital
Hall Lane
Appley Bridge
Wigan
WN6 9EP

Telephone: 01257 256305.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



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This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille and other languages upon request. For more information please ask in the department/ward.

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