

## Home Physiotherapy Series

# \*COLD THERAPY\*



Cold therapy can regulate circulation to alleviate bruising, pain, swelling, speed up recovery and relax the muscles. It can be used effectively for acute inflammation.

### Indicated for:

Acute inflammation (the affected area is red, swollen, painful and hot) and painful conditions, such as muscle and/or joint sprains, acute degenerative arthritis and acute gouty attacks.



## Method:

Apply an ice pack directly to the affected area, or immerse the affected area into ice water. Cold therapy should be applied for about 15 to 20 minutes, at least two hours apart each time or as advised by health care professionals.

## Method 1

Ice pack - wrap with a damp, thin towel to avoid cold burn.



## Method 2

Make your own ice bag - put some ice cubes into a large plastic bag, then add some water (e.g. half a glass), and seal the bag.



## Method 3

Ice water - place approximately equal amounts of ice and water into a plastic tub. Immerse and gently exercise the affected area in the ice water to improve circulation.



## Effects of Cold Therapy:

When applying cold therapy, the affected area will feel cold, and gradually numb. The overlying skin may also become red. This is normal and will gradually subside in about 15 minutes after cold therapy. If there is persistent rash, pain, worsening of symptoms or discomfort, stop immediately and seek advice from a physiotherapist or other healthcare professionals.



## Contraindications:

Cold application is not suitable for the following conditions: Impaired circulation (e.g. deep vein thrombosis, peripheral vascular disease), area near a chronic wound or bleeding tissue, cold allergy and inability to understand instructions (e.g. individuals with dementia).

## Precautions:

1. If you have any of the following conditions: cardiac failure or hypertension, and applying cold therapy to a large area, impaired skin sensation, tissue near or around the eyes, shoulders or neck, infected, damaged or at-risk skin, please consult a doctor or physiotherapist before using cold therapy.
2. As sensation of temperature may be affected by topical ointments, do not apply any ointment to the affected area before using cold therapy so as to prevent cold burns.
3. Cold therapy is more effective when there is adequate rest, elevation of the affected area and rehabilitation exercise.
4. Do not fall asleep; prolonged exposure to ice packs can lead to cold burn.
5. If there is no improvement after undergoing cold therapy for some time, seek advice from a physiotherapist or other healthcare professionals.



If you have any questions regarding this pamphlet, please seek advice from a physiotherapist or other healthcare professionals.

Elderly Health Service

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