

# APPLYING ICE/HEAT

## KEEP IN MIND

- \* Use just ice (no heat) directly after an injury or flare-up. Do not use heat alone until at least 3 days *after* an injury or flare-up.
- \* **Always use a moist (not dripping wet) towel on the skin between the ice or the heat source.**
- \* **Patients with diabetes and/or neuropathy please use extra caution and avoid numbness.**

## HOW TO USE ICE

- \* Use **crushed** ice, or a bag of frozen peas or corn niblets (mark the bag so you don't eat it later!).
- \* Apply ice until the area goes numb. Everyone's body is different, so we can't predict how much time it will take, but you can use the "CBAN" method: First the area will feel *Cold*, followed by *Burning*, then *Achy*, and finally *Numb*.
- \* Once the area is numb, remove the ice. Wait at least 1 hour before reapplying to the same area (unless using the sandwich method).
- \* For small areas like your hands or feet, use a bucket of ice water. Dunk the area under the water until it's numb (this method is much quicker than crushed ice).

## HOW TO USE HEAT

- \* **Never use dry heat.** A moist-type heating pad is best, but you can also use a hot water bottle. If you're not sure whether your heating pad is moist or dry, use these directions to ensure moist heat:
  - Cut a black plastic trash bag to fit the heating pad like a pillow case
  - Place the heating pad inside the bag
  - Place a moist towel on your skin
  - Place the covered heating pad on top of the moist towel
- \* Limit the application of heat to half an hour.
- \* Never lie on top of a heating pad or hot water bottle. Instead, lean against it or lay it on top of you (fold a blanket on top of the pad/bottle to weigh it down if you need to).
- \* Don't use heat on your head, or over cuts/sores/rash or chronically numb areas (see above caution if diabetic).

## "SANDWICH" METHOD

- \* Ice the area until numb, then apply moist heat for 15 to 20 minutes; ice again until numb. Wait at least 1 hour before the next cycle of ice-heat-ice.

## "FLIP-FLOP" METHOD

- \* Start with either ice or heat. Leave on area for 2-5 minutes. Switch, and leave on area for 2-5 minutes. Go back and forth between ice and heat in this manner for 3-4 full cycles.

*Call the office at 410.305.1331 if you have any questions.*