

# Vital Link Chiropractic

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## Ice or heat?

I am often asked by patients. Should I ice this or heat it? And for good reason there is a lot of misinformation about icing and heating tissue.

A good rule of thumb is to ice swollen joints and to heat spastic muscle. But if you are confused just use ice. The ice is important to inhibit the inflammation to the greatest degree possible so the tissue will not over-heat. What do I mean by over-heat? This goes back to my statement of "Motion is life" If swelling is allowed to get out of control, more and more poorly constructed scar tissue will be laid down.

**Can I ice too long?** Yes. The amount of time that ice is applied is very important. Cold will initially cause the blood vessels to constrict but eventually the body will innately prevail and cause vasodilatation allowing an increased blood supply to the area. And in this case more blood equals more damaged tissue and more swelling.

Because of this the following times are recommended:

10 minutes-Cervical –*neck*-- (elbow, wrist, hand, shin, ankle, foot)

15 minutes-Thoracic --*Mid back*—(Shoulder, knee)

20 minutes—Lumbar –*low back*- (pelvis, thigh)

**Be careful you must always protect your skin from frostbite:**

Do not allow ice to sit against the skin without a layer of protection. Either continually move the ice as in an ice massage or use a thin towel between the ice and skin.

**Come to Vital Link Chiropractic and we will give you a free ice pack with you exam.**

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