Stretching and Icing: Principles

Stretching and the use of heat and ice are excellent therapeutic devices, used properly! Used improperly, however, they put you at risk for greater injury and a delay in the healing process you are seeking. Get to know these principles AND apply them.

These exercises should only be performed after evaluation by a qualified professional and under their instruction. Failure to properly ascertain the reasons for certain injuries or the causes of pain may lead to further injury if these exercises are performed.
Should you experience pain or discomfort while doing an exercise, stop immediately. Follow only the exercises that your doctor has recommended to avoid the potential of further injury.





How to Use Ice and Heat

★ **Always protect your skin with a layer of thin towel to avoid frostbite.**

★ **Apply ice for a period of 10 to 15 minutes. The thicker the body part, the more time it will need to cool down, the thinner the body part, the less time it will need.**

★ **You may choose to ice every hour until pain and/or swelling is reduced.**

★ **Never use ice on an area of decreased sensitivity.**

★ **Never use ice on an area which has been previously frostbitten.**

★ **Wrapping the ice pack in a warm, moist towel allows greater comfort and helps conduct the cold more efficiently.**

★ **If you prefer heat, use it only after the first 72 hours following an injury. While heat may feel good at first, it may increase inflammation and therefore pain, stiffness, and swelling may follow.**

★ **Never sleep on a heating pad or any other heat source. Apply heat to the body, not your body to the heat. Protect your skin with a few towel layers.**

★ **Apply the heat for no more than 15 minutes at a time. Never use an electric heat pad on high setting.**

★ **Heat is most proper for areas of old injuries and arthritic joints; ice is most proper for acute pain, redness, swelling, inflamed (warm/ hot feeling) problems.**

★ **Always allow an iced area an hour to warm up again after icing it before you stretch it!**

★ **Call our office at (952) 474-1777 if you have any questions or concerns.**



TOP TEN PRINCIPLES OF STRETCHING

. 1.Do not try to be flexible. Just learn to stretch properly and flexibility will come with time. Flexibility is only one of the many benefits of stretching.

. 2.Don't stretch too far, especially in the beginning. Get a slight stretch and increase it after you feel yourself relax.

. 3.Breathe slowly, deeply, and naturally. Exhale as you bend forward. Do not stretch to a point where you cannot breathe normally.

. 4.Do not bounce. Bouncing tightens the very muscles you are trying to stretch. Stretch and hold most stretches for two to five seconds, adding time as you relax.

. 5.Do as many repetitions as you have time for and considering how much a muscle will be used in the activity you are preparing it for. Also, old injuries to a muscle may require extra attention.

. 6.Think about the area being stretched as you stretch it. Feel the stretch. If the tension becomes greater as you stretch, you are over-stretching. Ease off into a more comfortable position.

. 7.Muscles work in opposing pairs. As a muscle is contracted it automatically relaxes the muscle which moves the body in the opposite direction. So, contracting your hamstring muscles while you stretch your quadriceps, for example, may help you to get a better stretch.

. 8.Be sure to stretch both sides of the body.

. 9.Stretching should feel good, not hurt.

. 10. Never stretch a muscle you have just iced down. Allow it to warm for a good hour before stretching it. You may easily tear a muscle you try to stretch which is cold and tense.

OTHER THINGS TO BE AWARE OF:

. •We are different every day. Some days we are more tight or more loose than other days.

. •You have control over what you feel by what you do.

. •Regularity and relaxation are the most important factors in stretching. If you start stretching regularly, you will naturally become more fit and active.

- •Don’t compare yourself with others. Even if you are tight and inflexible, don’t let this stop you from stretching and improving yourself.

- •Proper stretching means stretching within your own limits, relaxed and without comparisons.

- •Stretching keeps your body ready for movement.

- •Stretch whenever you feel like it. It will always make you feel good.

- •Stretching properly reduces the chances of injury and wear and tear on your joints.

- •Stretching properly enhances your strength and athletic performance.