

Should You Use Heat or Cold on Your Hip Pain?

It depends on the injury or problem you have with your hip. If the hip injury or pain is brand new (acute) after trauma (fall, athletic injury, motor vehicle accident, or surgery) the proper choice is the use of ice. Such an injury usually damages blood vessels and swelling occurs. A cold pack will cause the blood vessels to restrict and reduce the swelling. A cold pack may also help control “excessive” swelling. Ice may also be used after high-intensity exercise to prevent or reduce inflammation.

For the first 24-48 hours apply ice to the hip. To prevent ice burn, place a damp towel between the icepack and your skin. Apply the ice pack for 15-20 minutes to the hip every 3 hours (if able). Limit icing sessions to 15-20 minutes to avoid causing tissue damage or irritation to the skin.

You can purchase an ice pack or use a bag of frozen vegetables from your freezer. You can make your own cold pack with two-gallon freezer bags, a cup of rubbing alcohol, and 4 cups of water. Put the four cups of water and one cup of rubbing alcohol into one of the freezer bags. Get the excess air out. Place the bag inside the second gallon freezer bag and freeze for several hours. It makes a nice pliable cold pack.

When should you apply heat for hip pain?

Heat therapy is generally more appropriate for chronic types of hip pain. This might include a stiff hip, arthritis, recurring injuries, and muscle pain or soreness. Heat allows for blood vessels to expand and muscles to relax. More blood flow can improve healing. Heat also tends to be a more pleasant and soothing treatment to most people, especially with arthritis.

Take caution to not to use the heat for an extended amount of time which can lead to skin irritation, blistering, and even burns. Do not sleep with a heat treatment.

For a deep form of heat treatment, you might consider use of a far infrared heating system. Regular heat penetrates barely beyond the surface of the skin. Far infrared penetrates 2.36 inch. We put in a link for a discount on a purchase.



Although heat may be more desirable for some chronic problems, many people still choose cold to help them control their pain. In fact, Brad uses a cold pack to help manage his chronic back pain (spondylolisthesis). So, in summary, once you get past the acute phase of an injury, heat or cold can be used.