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## The Greenhill Osteopathic Practice

### USING HOT & COLD PACKS

This leaflet is for general information purposes only. Please do seek the advice of a qualified professional before applying any treatment to an injury. Please avoid if you have an existing medical condition such as e.g. diabetes, peripheral vascular disease, hypothyroidism, high blood pressure, heart disease or anaemia

Using alternating hot and cold applications over an injured area can have a positive effect on post exercise recovery and boost the circulation<sup>1</sup>. Often recommended after the initial acute phase of an injury (after the first 3-4 days, provided the swelling has subsided a little) to boost the circulation, enhance repair and speed healing<sup>2</sup>

**Time of application:** Moist heat and cold applications seem to be more effective , with three times duration of heat compared to cold. No more than 20 minutes a day at a time and up to 3-4 times daily

#### General pointers

- **Contrasting temperature**  
Aim for water which is hot, but not uncomfortably so, and as cold as you can get it.
- **Quick routine**  
Apply moist heat for 1 minute followed by cold for 20 seconds alternating for 4-5 changeovers.
- **Slow routine**  
Apply moist heat for 3 minutes followed by cold for 1 minute alternating for 4-5 changeovers.
- **Watch the time**  
No longer than 20 minutes in a session. You may cause further damage to the tissues if you fall asleep with a heat pack on.
- **Allow recovery between treatments**  
No more than 20 minutes at a time, 3-4 times daily.

#### Method of application

##### **Option 1**

Use the shower to alternate between hot and cold.

##### **Option 2**

if using for the lower extremity use bowls filled with hot and cold water.

##### **Option 3**

Use proprietary gel bags or wheat bags

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<sup>1</sup> Cochrane DJ (2004) Alternating hot and cold water immersion for athlete recovery: a review. Phys Ther Sport 5:26–32

<sup>2</sup> J Vaile, S Halson, N Gill, B Dawson Effect of hydrotherapy on the signs and symptoms of delayed onset muscle soreness Eur J Appl Physiol (2008) 102:447–455