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USING HOT PACKS

This leaflet is for general information purposes only. Please do seek the advice of a qualified professional before applying any heat based treatment. Please avoid if you have an existing medical condition such as e.g. rheumatoid or inflammatory arthritis, diabetes, peripheral vascular disease, hyperthyroidism, high blood pressure or heart disease. Applying heat to a previously injured or shortened muscle can have a positive effect on recovery. It can be effective in the treatment of longer term injury including muscle stiffness and pain as well as promoting flexibility¹.

Time of application: no more than 10 minutes at a time, best repeated little and often²

General pointers

- **Moist heat**
Moist heat seems more effective than dry heat is most effective for longer term injury owing an injury. The beneficial effects diminish significantly after about 48 hours³.
- **Gentle stretching**
Gently stretching the injured area whilst it is being heated may be effective at enhancing flexibility and reducing stiffness.
- **Watch the time**
Heat for up to 10 minutes at a time. You may cause damage to the tissues, including the skin, by heating for too long.
- **Avoid skin damage**
Use a cover for a hot water bottle or gel bag to reduce thermal sensitivity
- **Allow recovery between treatments**
Allow area to cool down for at least 1 hour before beginning the heating routine again.

Method of application

Option 1

Use a hot flannel wrung out and applied locally to the injured area

Option 2

Using the shower to direct a stream of hot water onto the injured

Option 3

Proprietary hot pack, wheat bag or hot water bottle

¹ Michlovitz SL. Thermal Agents In Rehabilitation. 3rd rev. ed. Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1996.

² Oosterveld FG, Rasker JJ. Treating arthritis with locally applied heat or cold. Seminars in Arthritis and Rheumatism 1994 Oct; 24(2): 82-90

³ Funk D, Swank AM, Adams KJ, Treolo D. Efficacy of moist heat pack application over static stretching on hamstring flexibility. J Strength Cond Res. 2001 Feb;15(1):123-6.