



Banff Sport Medicine

Cold Therapy

What is Cold Therapy?

Cold therapy is the use of ice or cold to reduce pain, inflammation, swelling and spasm from an injury or after surgery. Cold therapy can be applied with a bag of ice, an ice pack, gel pack, cold compress or by using a specialized Cold Therapy Unit.

Cold therapy is used as part of rehabilitation after knee, shoulder and ankle surgeries, such as arthroscopy, anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) reconstruction, shoulder reconstruction or rotator cuff repair¹.

What does it do?

Cold therapy slows down the blood flow to an injured area. Research has proven cold therapy decreases pain, inflammation, swelling, blood loss, and narcotic use after surgery².

What do we recommend?

After your surgery we recommend that you use cold therapy to decrease pain and to improve your recovery.

Research has shown that patients achieve the best results using a Cold Therapy Unit³. This type of cold therapy is the safest and most convenient to apply. Some names of these Cold Therapy Units are Aircast Cryo/Cuff™, DonJoy Iceman®, Ossur Cold Rush™ and Polarcare Kodiak®.

How often should I use cold therapy?

You should use cold therapy a minimum of 5 times per day for 20 minutes each time for the first 5-7 days after surgery. It is essential that you protect your skin from the cold therapy product using a cloth or towel to prevent skin injury.

If you are using a Cold Therapy Unit it is possible to safely keep the cold pads on for much longer periods of time, including overnight. To get the best results and prevent skin injury, you should always carefully follow the instructions that come with the Cold Therapy Unit.

Ordering a Cold Therapy Unit

You can order your cold therapy unit with a knee, shoulder or ankle pad through our website at: www.banffsportmed.ca/shop

¹ Raynor MC, Pietrobon R, Guller U, Higgins LD. Cryotherapy after ACL reconstruction: a meta-analysis. J Knee Surg. 2005 Apr;18(2):123-9.

² Wilke B, Weiner RD. Postoperative cryotherapy: risks versus benefits of continuous-flow cryotherapy units. Clin Podiatr Med Surg. 2003 Apr;20(2):307-22.

³ Barber FA. A comparison of crushed ice and continuous flow cold therapy. Am J Knee Surg. 2000 Spring;13(2):97-101; discussion 102.