



What is...

The Proper Use of Heat?

When used properly, heat can help increase blood flow, decrease pain, relax muscles, and prepare muscles and tendons for stretching. Moist heat tends to penetrate deeper than dry heat, although either will work.

Heat can be obtained from electric heating pads, gel packs heated in water or microwaves, or hot water baths. If an electric heating pad is used, be sure it is approved for use with moisture before using a moist towel.

Stretching may be performed after the heat application. Heating may be applied every hour as needed.

Pads

1. If using electric pad, plug in and place on comfortable setting. If using a gel pack, heat to manufacturer's instructions.
2. Place the hot pad around affected area.
3. Keep in place for 20-30 minutes.
4. Remove pad.

Bath

1. Fill bucket with water at a temperature between 98 and 110 degrees.
2. Place affected body part in water.
3. Soak for 20-30 minutes. If you are soaking your wrist, fingers or foot, it may help to move through the range of motion during immersion.
4. Remove from water.

Precautions

- Do not use heat if you have no feeling or sensation in the affected body part.
- Do not use electric heating pad in bed because you may fall asleep and sustain a burn.
- Do not heat if there is swelling present. Heat can cause swelling, and if this occurs you should elevate and follow with exercise to help reduce swelling.
- Do not heat if you have circulation impairments.
- Do not heat if you are a hemophiliac.
- Do not heat if the injury occurred within the last 48 hours.

- Do not use heat with open wounds or over stitches.