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If you have any questions, please contact:
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INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLYING AN ICE PACK

Physiotherapy Department

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLYING AN ICE PACK AT HOME

1. You should ensure that the area to be treated is sensitive to temperature by placing a cold and then a warm object against it and making sure you can tell the difference. If you have had ice treatment in the Physiotherapy Department, this test will have already been performed with test tubes of water.
2. Ideally, ice packs should be made from crushed ice, but a bag of frozen peas or a gel pack available from some sports shops will suffice.
3. The ice pack (or frozen peas) must be wrapped in an evenly dampened towel and not applied directly to the skin, or skin damage due to an ice burn may occur.
4. The pack, wrapped in its towelling, should be placed on the surface to be cooled and may be wrapped around a joint such as the knee, so that it covers all but the load bearing surface. Do not rest the joint or limb on the pack, or an ice burn may occur.

5. The ice pack should be lifted from the part after about 10 minutes to check for adverse reactions. The skin should be red in colour and cool. If it is white and very cold, remove the pack immediately. If no adverse reactions are noted and particularly if the skin is warm and not cold, the pack may be reapplied for a further 5 to 10 minutes. If the skin is in poor condition or the circulation is particularly bad, the pack should be checked after 5 minutes.

6. You should be aware that a poorly applied ice pack, or one that is left on for too long can cause an ice burn.

IF YOU FEEL PAIN OR INTENSE COLD DURING APPLICATION OF THE ICE PACK, YOU MUST REMOVE IT AND CHECK THE SKIN FOR SIGNS OF LOSS OF CIRCULATION, eg, WHITE COLOUR OR PURPLE INSTEAD OF PINK/RED AND VERY COLD TO TOUCH. ICE PACKS USED INCORRECTLY CAN CAUSE ICE BURNS, ie, A FORM OF FROSTBITE.

7. Ice packs are more effective when applied on a regular basis for 10 to 15 minutes every three to four hours, rather than on a once a day basis for half an hour.