



Banff Sport Medicine

BANFF SPORT MEDICINE
Orthopaedic Surgeons

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Cold Therapy Information

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 repair.¹

What does it do?

Cold therapy slows down the blood flow to an injured area. Research has shown that cold therapy decreases pain, inflammation, swelling, blood loss, and medication use after surgery.²

What do we recommend?

After your surgery we recommend that you use cold therapy to decrease pain and to improve your recovery. We also recommend that you use cold therapy after therapy and exercise sessions for the first 3 months after surgery.

To reduce swelling and inflammation, patients get the best results using a Cold Therapy Unit.³ 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 by 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 pad on for much longer periods of time (up to 5 hours). To get the best results and prevent skin injury, you should always carefully follow the specific Cold Therapy Unit instructions.

Where can I buy a cold therapy unit?

You can order a Cold Therapy Unit, complete with a knee or shoulder pad, through our website (<https://banffsportmed.ca/shop/>). Alternatively, you can purchase a Cold Therapy Unit from your local healthcare provider or from an online health supply store. For portable use you can purchase a battery pack, which allows you to use your Cold Therapy Unit without an electrical outlet. We recommend that you buy your Cold Therapy Unit at least a week before your surgery to make sure that you have it delivered in time.

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;