

## To Ice or Not to Ice: That's the question?

It may sound a bit strange coming from a chiropractor, but if you want the best healing possible for your body following an injury, my advice is to **not ice**. Why would I say such a thing?

Here is what ice does: It reduces blood flow to the area thus reducing inflammation. By deadening the nerve endings and reducing their ability to feel, you will have less pain. You will also have less swelling because of the lack of blood flow to the area. Less pain and less inflammation is a good thing, right? Wrong.

**Inflammation is your body's first step in healing an injury.** By bringing more blood to the area, you increase all of the cellular activity that lays down new tissue, strips away the dead stuff, and promotes healing. The swelling acts as a natural splint, protecting the damaged tissues. The pain keeps you from moving the area, and allows it to heal! This healing process takes time.

An example for you: A friend of mine has an eighteen month old who is learning to walk and move around. She is constantly bumping her head on things. The first time, my friend did the conventional mothering thing and put an ice bag on her head. The swelling went down, the

pain subsided, and her little baby had a lovely bruise that was painful for days afterwards. She asked me what I would have done. **I told her that I wouldn't have done anything.** The next time it happened, though it went against all of her mothering instincts, she didn't ice the area. It swelled up to a remarkable size, but then went down again in a couple of hours. What's very interesting is that she didn't bruise! Not even a bit!

Now, sometimes, you just might want to ice your injury. If you are a professional athlete or you would rather continue your activity and take the chance that your body won't heal as perfectly as it might (no judgment there, it's a choice) then you might want to consider icing your injury. It will allow you to get back to your activity faster and still perform at a high level. You run the risk of laying down more scar tissue than you need, leading to a longer, harder, and less complete recovery, but in the short term, you will be able to compete, or practice, or work. It's up to you.

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