



Joint Injury

TREATMENTS

Most joint injuries will heal well with the right treatment. Below are some of the most common treatments for injured joints.

- **Rest:** Avoid doing any activity that increases pain or swelling.
- **Changing how you do activities:** If your pain has slowly increased over time, stop and figure out what you're doing that might be causing the problem. Then stop the activity or change how you do it. Ask your health care practitioner for ideas about how you might be able to modify the activity for best results.
- **The RICE method:** This is used for acute joint injuries. It stands for:
 - > **Rest** the joint.
 - > **Ice** the joint (first 2–3 days after an injury).
 - > **Compress** the swelling (with wraps or bandages).
 - > **Elevate** the joint (above heart level).
- **Protection:** Joints may need a period of protection, support, or rest after an injury. Braces, splints, slings, or crutches may be used to protect the joint and help it heal.
- **Mobilization:** If a joint is immobile for too long, though, it can become weak and stiff. That's why it's important to start moving the joint as soon as you can. This includes doing gentle movements to increase a joint's range of motion.
- **Cold therapy (ice):** Icing a joint can ease pain and swelling. Apply ice right after an injury. You can ice 3–4 times a day for the first 2–3 days.

To safely ice a joint, follow these steps:

- > Wet a thin towel with water (room temperature or slightly warmer).
- > Wring out the excess water.
- > Wrap the wet towel around an ice pack or a plastic bag of crushed ice.
- > Lie down and place the ice pack on the joint for 10–15 minutes.

Note: Don't put the ice pack directly on your skin. And never leave ice on for longer than 20 minutes.

- **Heat therapy:** Heat increases circulation and swelling, so it's not good to use heat in the first 2–3 days after an injury. But after the swelling goes down, heat can relax tense muscles and reduce pain.

To safely apply moist heat to a joint, follow these steps:

- > Wet a thin towel with water (room temperature or slightly warmer).
- > Wring out the excess water.
- > Microwave a hot pack or fill a hot water bottle with very hot water. Wrap the wet towel around it.
- > Lie down and place the hot pack on the joint for 15–20 minutes, several times a day.

Note: Don't put the hot pack directly on your skin or leave it on for longer than 20 minutes. Never lie on top of an electric heating pad or fall asleep with it.

- **Exercise:** Exercise is one of the best things you can do for your joints. It can reduce joint pain and help keep your joints healthy. Talk

to your health care practitioner about an exercise program that will support your joint health.

- **Chiropractic:** Chiropractors use many methods to treat joints and surrounding tissues. These might include adjustments, ice or heat, electric stimulation to reduce pain and swelling, massage, and other hands-on treatments. They might also include a custom program of stretching, strengthening, and balance exercises.
- **Physical Therapy:** This can involve exercises, manual therapy, and modalities to ease pain and strengthen affected body regions.
- **Acupuncture:** This includes pain-easing and stress-calming techniques.
- **Massage Therapy:** This relieves muscle tension and lowers stress.
- **Nutritional Services:** This may involve working with a dietitian or nutritionist to identify and avoid dietary concerns.
- **Occupational Therapy:** This type of therapy can help you learn to do daily tasks with less stress on your joints.

- **Medicines:** There are a number of different medications, both over-the-counter and prescription, that may help to reduce pain and inflammation.

- **Surgery:** Surgery is usually a last resort for joint pain. There are many different surgical options. These range from repair of one part of a joint to full joint replacement.

- **Naturopathic Services:** This includes using natural treatments like herbs, dietary changes, and gentle exercises.

For help with treating your specific injury, talk with your health care practitioner. He or she can help you understand which treatments would be helpful and which health care practitioners you may want as part of your health care team.

Ask your health care practitioner if there are any tests, referrals, or treatments that might be helpful to use along with your current treatment plan.

