

# Ice Cube Massage

**Indications** - This technique can provide pain relief and promote healing of soft tissues including tendons, ligaments, and muscles that are afflicted with injury inflammation, and scar tissue.

**Mechanism of Action** - Cold therapy provided by ice massage can assist with reducing tissue inflammation. It can supplement anti-inflammatory medication taken by mouth. Cold therapy also promotes tissue healing - the cold causes initial vasoconstriction (decreased blood flow) then subsequent vasodilatation (increased blood flow as the tissues rewarm), and this increased blood flow helps the healing response.

## Make Your Own Ice Cups

- Use a bathroom size “dixie” paper cup in the 3-4 oz variety.
- Fill several of these 3/4 of the way up with water and put them in your freezer. Once frozen, they will make a perfect ice cup.
- Once the cups are frozen, remove one from the freezer, and tear away the top 3/4 of the paper cup.



- This will leave the bottom of the cup for you to hold onto, and the ice will be exposed to rub onto your sports injury.
- Apply the end of the ice cube directly to the skin over the tender area. Rub the ice in a small circle to cover the entire tender area. Pressure should be firm but not heavy.
- Apply for 8-10 minutes. Make sure you put a towel under the areas being iced, as it will melt and drip.

## Ice Cube Massage Procedure:

1. Find the area of injury that has maximum tenderness.
2. Hold a single dixie ice cube in your hand by the paper bottom. You can also use a wash cloth or dish rag.
3. Initially the skin will feel very cold, then it will start to burn a little, then you will feel some aching, and finally the skin will feel numb. Keep rubbing until the cold travels deep into the affected tissue and the tissue is no longer tender when you press on it. This can take 5-10 minutes. By this time the skin should be pink.
4. Blot up the melting water with a towel.
5. Avoid ice massage directly over bony prominences.
6. Frequency of treatments: once per day is fine for chronic conditions (eg. tennis elbow). They can be done more often for acute injuries, but do not exceed three times per day.