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## First Aid Ice Application

In general, use ice for the initial care of an athletic injury, such as a pulled muscle, joint sprain or bruise. Ice reduces pain, prevents swelling information and decreases muscle spasm. Apply ice for 15-20 minutes, remove, then re-apply about an hour later. You can repeat this process several times a day for the first 1-2 days following the injury. Once the initial inflammation has resolved, and the swelling is gone, you can then use heat. However, if in doubt use ice. Heat used too soon after an injury can increase swelling and inflammation.

**Rest** by avoiding painful activities.

**Ice** Apply for 15-20\* minutes, remove for 1.5 to 2 hours and repeat.

**Compression** Wrap the injured area with an elastic bandage when icing. Wear the elastic bandage when not icing if instructed to do so. The wrap should be snug but not real tight.

**Elevate** Keep the area raised above heart level when possible, practical or if not painful to do so. Do not move a suspected fracture or dislocation.

**Stabilization** refers to measures to protect the injury and allow it to heal. This may include a brace, splint, crutches or other protective device as necessary.

**\*Ice precautions** To avoid possible nerve compression injury, apply ice for a maximum of 15 minutes with light compression over bony areas with superficial nerves including the outer knee, inner elbow and outer waist. Remove the ice and the wrap immediately if you feel pins and needles similar to the sensation when you hit your funny bone or when your foot "falls asleep."

Instant ice packs, cold gel packs, reusable cold packs and ice packs from a refrigerator-type freezer can damage the skin. Ice from a freezer and gel packs are well below freezing (1°F to -5°F) which can cause frostbite. Ice machines,

such as the one in the athletic training facility, store ice just below freezing at about 30°F, therefore making frostbite less likely. However, athletes should not leave the ice on any longer than 15-20 minutes at a time. If you are using an instant ice pack, place a barrier between the ice and the skin to prevent frostbite and in case the chemical in the pack leaks.

**About Ice Massage** Ice massage is a technique commonly used to treat shin splints and various forms of tendinitis. Fill a paper or styrofoam cup with water and place it in your freezer. Once the water is frozen, peel off the top third of the cup, turn the cup upside down and place the ice directly on the skin. Slowly rub the ice on the skin using a longitudinal (up-down) or circular pattern over the injured area for 7-10 minutes. Treat an area approximately 2-3 times the diameter of the top of the ice. For shin splints, use a longitudinal pattern; for injuries such as knee or elbow tendinitis, use a circular pattern. Since ice massage can get a little messy once the ice starts melting, treat your injury in an area that can get wet and have a towel handy.