

Headache/Migraine Icing, Heating & Product Information Sheet

The application of both ice and heat can be very helpful for relieving headaches and migraines.

Some general tips to follow are:

- Icing is best for vascular headaches and migraines when experiencing acute pain.
- Applying a cold compress or ice pack to the head or neck has a numbing effect that may help to dull the pain. When applied at the outset of a migraine, it can significantly reduce pain.
- Apply cold therapy for 15-20 minutes either over the area of pain or the base of the neck. Always place the cold pack or wrapped in a cloth or towel to protect the skin.
- Lying down with the head flat, eyes closed, in a quiet and darkened room is best for headaches and especially migraines.
- Heating is best when pain feels mild and muscular in nature, and is typically referred to as tension headaches.
- Apply a warm moist towel or heat wrap snugly around the neck or posterior part of the head to relax tense muscles.
- Apply heat therapy for 20 minutes and repeat every few hours until tension is reduced or gone.
- Wrap the heat pack in a cloth or towel for protection of the skin if needed.

Various cooling and heating tools can be found in stores and online. General cold and ice packs are fine, but gel based packs are most effective because they will retain the cold for longer. Heating tools may be referred to as heat packs, heat wraps, or a bed buddy. They are typically filled with gels or beads, scented or unscented, and can be warmed in the microwave then applied to the area of pain. Moist heat therapy penetrates to the deeper muscles for a more productive healing effect. Avoid electrical heating pads if possible, because they employ dry heat. Dry heat may feel good, but it only reaches the surface and does not penetrate to the deeper muscles, thus reducing the therapeutic benefit. Some products that we recommend come from the Elasto-Gel line from Southwest Technologies Inc. These products are well made and can be both cooled in the freezer and heated in the microwave. Their full product line is available on their website at <https://www.elastogels.com> and select products can be found on Amazon.