



HEAT VS. COLD: WHICH IS BETTER FOR PAIN RELIEF?

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INTRODUCTION

When you're dealing with pain, whether it's a sudden injury or a long-standing ache, one of the most common questions is: Should I use ice or heat?

At Rosedale Wellness Centre, our team of physiotherapists, chiropractors, massage therapists, and other practitioners hear this almost daily. The answer isn't always one-size-fits-all — but with a few simple guidelines, you can make the right choice and feel better faster.

WHEN TO USE COLD

Cold therapy (ice packs, frozen gel packs, even a bag of peas) is best for acute, fresh injuries. If you've just sprained your ankle, tweaked your back, or noticed swelling and inflammation, cold is your friend.

✓ **How it works:** Cold constricts blood vessels, reducing blood flow to the area. This helps limit swelling and numbs pain signals.

✓ **Best for:** New injuries within the first 24–72 hours.

- Swelling or redness
- Sharp, sudden pain

✓ **How to apply:** Place a cold pack over the injured area for 15–20 minutes, then remove it. Always use a towel between your skin and the ice to prevent burns. Repeat a few times per day as needed.

WHEN TO USE HEAT

Heat therapy (heating pads, warm baths, hot water bottles) is ideal for chronic or lingering pain. If your muscles feel stiff or your joints are achy, heat can help loosen things up.

✓ **How it works:** Heat dilates blood vessels, increasing circulation. This brings oxygen and nutrients to sore tissues and helps relax tight muscles.

✓ **Best for:**

- Muscle stiffness or spasms
- Chronic low back pain
- Arthritis and joint tightness



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✓ How to apply: Use a heating pad or warm compress for 15–20 minutes. Heat should feel soothing, not burning. If you notice increased swelling, switch back to cold.

Remember: Heat is for healing. It helps your body move more freely when stiffness lingers.

WHAT ABOUT WHEN TO AVOID EACH BOTH?

✓ Avoid cold therapy if you have circulation issues, nerve damage, or cold hypersensitivity.

✓ Avoid heat therapy with new injuries, open wounds, or areas with swelling or bruising—it can make things worse.

WHAT ABOUT CONTRAST THERAPY?

Sometimes alternating heat and cold (known as contrast therapy) can help with conditions like delayed-onset muscle soreness or certain chronic injuries.

Switching between the two encourages circulation and recovery while also helping with stiffness.

STILL UNSURE?

Every body is different, and injuries can be more complex than they seem. If you're unsure whether to use heat, cold, or both, our physiotherapists and chiropractors can guide you.

At Rosedale Wellness Centre, our team will assess your condition and design a treatment plan tailored to your recovery—helping you get back to feeling your best faster.

If you're dealing with pain or an injury and aren't sure whether to use hot or cold therapy, book an appointment today. Our team is here to guide you every step of the way.

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Hana Veprikova
Senior Physiotherapist

Have you met Hana?

Hana is a Senior Registered Physiotherapist who graduated from the University of Western Ontario with a Master's Degree in Physical Therapy. Since then, she has established a diverse practice in general orthopedics, geriatrics, and women's health. Hana specializes in treating pelvic floor dysfunction, including incontinence, prolapse, and pelvic pain related to pregnancy, labour, and menopause.

In her orthopedic work, she applies advanced skills gained from numerous postgraduate courses to support mobility in patients of all ages, often integrating Pilates instructor training into her rehabilitation programs.

She enjoys skiing, spending time in nature, connecting with animals, diving, and horseback riding. Her favourite film is Deadpool, and she admires actress Meryl Streep.

CLIENT TESTIMONIALS



I had the pleasure of working with Varuna Singh as my physiotherapist, and I can't thank her enough for the difference she has made in my life. When I first started, I was experiencing a lot of pain, especially sciatic pain in my back. With her care, expertise, and guidance, I feel so much better now.

-Sara Nikoofal



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