



Orthopaedic Specialists  
of Central Arizona

## **POST-OPERATIVE ICING INSTRUCTIONS**

The use of ice, or cryotherapy, can relieve pain, swelling, inflammation or spasm. It is important that you are consistent with your icing program. You should continue a regular and consistent icing program as long you experience symptoms. Remember, ice is “your friend” after any orthopaedic injury or surgery.

In order to maximize the benefit of the ice treatments, you must ice the affected area at least four times a day, 15-20 minutes at a time. A good pattern is to ice in the morning, at noon, in the afternoon, and again in the evening. Icing before bedtime can also be helpful for nighttime pain. In addition, ice following physical therapy, independent exercises, any prolonged activity or vigorous exercise. If you want to use ice more often, that is perfectly fine.

There are many good ways to use ice. NEVER place ice in direct contact with your skin. In all cases, the ice pack should have a towel, wash cloth or pillow case between it and your skin. Be sure you do not fall asleep with ice on your skin.

ICE PACKS: Ice packs may be made with cubed, crushed, or shaved ice. Wrap the ice pack in a damp towel and apply it to the affected area, if needs be securing it with an Ace wrap.

VEGETABLE PACK: Place loose frozen small vegetables (peas, corn, etc.) in a plastic bag and apply to the affected area on top of a damp cloth. Refreeze after use and label “DO NOT EAT”. To reuse, bang frozen bag gently on a counter edge to loosen vegetables.

ALCOHOL PACK: Combine 3 cups of water with 1 cup of rubbing alcohol in a zip-lock bag and freeze overnight until slushy. Wrap cold damp towel over the bag and apply to affected area. Refreeze after use. This mixture is unsafe to drink or eat. Ensure that the bag does not leak on other items in your freezer, or get into the hands of small children.

POLAR CARE “COLD THERAPY”: Polar pads may be recommended or given to you. Please follow the specific instructions that accompany the unit. *Never* apply the polar pad directly onto your skin as this may result in serious skin injury.