

SWELLING CONTROL TECHNIQUES

1. **ELEVATE, ELEVATE, ELEVATE!** When elevating, the swollen part should be higher than your heart. If you have not been told to immobilize the part, then do gentle movements while the part is elevated. This muscle action will help pump the excess fluid back to your body.

2. Compression helps decrease swelling. Compression may be provided by using an ace bandage. When aching, be sure to always wrap in a spiraling fashion and not in a circular motion. If the wrap is causing pain, PLEASE take it off and reapply it slightly looser.

3. Ice should be used for the first 48 to 72 hours. Ice also can be used after activity for irritation &/or increased swelling. If you have been instructed, after ice treatments, perform stretching exercises. Below are 2 types of ice treatments:

a. Ice Packs. Generally should be applied for 10 to 20 minutes every 2 hours as needed. If icing a muscle, try to put it in a stretched position (ex. when icing the front of the thigh, bend the knee). If you are sensitive to cold, place a cold, wet layer of toweling between your skin and the ice pack.

b. Ice Bath. This treatment is more intense. Using a 5 gallon bucket works best. The height of the water only needs to cover the injured area. You need enough ice to maintain a thin layer on the top of the water. If you are not *numb* within 3-5 min., the water is not cold enough. Be aware, toes and fingers will initially be very irritated.

4. Contrast baths are often helpful in decreasing swelling and increasing range of motion. This treatment consists of switching an arm or leg from a warm bath (not hot) and an ice bath (as in 3. b, however, water level can be higher.)

The progression is as follows:

warm water - 4 min.

cold water - 1 min.

warm water - 4 min.

cold water - 1 min.

warm water - 4 min.

cold water - 1 min.

warm water - 4 min.

cold water - 1 min.

If possible, after contrast bath treatment, perform stretching exercises as instructed then rewrap with ace wrap and elevate for at least 10-20 minutes.