

Physio News

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What's hot and what's not in the treatment of summer strains and sprains

Summer is heating up and as Canadians spend more time doing outdoor activities, the likelihood of injury increases. Even a simple sprained ankle can mean weeks off your feet - leaving you in pain, and ruining your summer vacation. Timely and proper treatment of an injury is crucial for recovery. But just how do you deal with those summer strains and sprains? "Should I use hot or cold?" is one of the questions physiotherapists get asked most frequently. If used correctly following an injury or when beginning a rehabilitation or exercise program, hot and cold can help to reduce pain, assist with tissue healing, control swelling, and increase flexibility. If used incorrectly, however, they can worsen an injury or slow recovery times. Here's some timely advice on the use of hot and cold.

Cold Therapy

Cold is applied in the acute stage of an injury (the first 24-48 hours) to prevent tissue damage. It can be used after the first 48 hours if inflammation persists. The "PRICE" protocol (Protection, Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation) should be used to manage an injury in this early stage when swelling and pain are at their peak. Cold may also be applied after an exercise program to prevent or reduce pain, or to ease muscle spasms. When applying ice to the skin, it is important to use a damp towel between the ice and the skin to increase effectiveness and decrease the risk of nerve or skin damage which could lead to frostbite. Cold therapy may be applied periodically throughout the day for approximately 10 to 15 minutes at a time. When using ice packs or other cooling agents, it is important to visually check the area that is being treated every five minutes or so. While there may be discomfort and redness initially, treatment should be discontinued if these symptoms persist. It is recommended that people with certain medical conditions (ie Raynauds Syndrome) not use cold therapy. Ask your family physician if you have any pre existing health condition that would preclude you from using cold therapy.

Heat Therapy

Heat is often used in the chronic phase of an injury. It may also be used prior to therapy or exercise to decrease muscle tension and increase flexibility and range of motion. It also plays a role in pain management and reduction of muscle spasms, muscle tension, and joint stiffness. Moist heat such as the hot packs used in physiotherapy clinics is preferred over dry heat such as cloth bean bags, because damp heat penetrates deeper. To create moist heat at home when using a non-electrical heat source, first wrap a damp towel around the hot pack, cover with dry toweling and apply it to the treatment area. No matter what type of heating agent you use, several layers of toweling should be used as a barrier between the skin and the hot pack to help prevent skin irritation or burns. Hot packs should be applied for 15 to 20 minutes. Visually check the skin every five minutes and discontinue treatment if there are persistent abnormal changes in skin colour or you experience increased discomfort. Do not lie on a hot pack or apply heat at bedtime since it increases the likelihood of burns resulting from close or prolonged contact with the heat source.

Heat therapy should be avoided in the acute phase of an injury when swelling is present and the skin is hot to touch.

It is recommended that people with certain medical conditions not use heat therapy. Ask your family physician if you have any pre existing health condition that would preclude you from using heat therapy.

Not sure which option is best for you?

Talk to a physiotherapist!

Both hot and cold therapies have a role to play in speeding your recovery or helping you reach your rehabilitation and training goals. If you question whether to use hot or cold, or if you are unsure about the nature or severity of your injury, talk to your physiotherapist. He/she can advise you on the proper use of hot or cold for your situation or specific condition. Physiotherapists are healthcare professionals who help people of all ages and lifestyles gain and maintain their desired level of active living and physical mobility. With their applied knowledge and understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists are able to help you to increase your mobility, relieve pain, build strength, and improve balance and cardiovascular function. Physiotherapists not only treat injuries, they also teach you how to prevent the onset of pain or injury, which can limit your activity. If you have suffered a summer strain/sprain that is still limiting your function and causing you pain then call to see one of our physical therapists today!

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Willow Park hosts special event tonight

Are you afraid of the dark?

Back by popular demand tonight (Friday, August 8), come and join other night owls at Norval's Willow Park Ecology Centre from 8:15-10:15 p.m. to find out what is actually out there in the forest.

Local naturalists Fiona Reid and Don Scallen, who are experts on native animals, birds and insects, will guide visitors through various parts of the park to show us what is hidden behind the dusk. This event has been the most popular one in past years as



A LEOPARD FROG

Photo by Don Scallen

nighttime is such an amazing backdrop for seeing park nightlife without disturbing it. You will see and learn about bats, frogs, moths and so much more!

Wear sturdy shoes, long pants, and bug spray, and bring a flashlight and your sense of adventure!

Admission is free. The park is located in the northwest corner of Norval, off Mary Street and Guelph St./Hwy 7. For more information contact 416-575-1232.

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Upcoming golf tournaments to aid charities

The Terra Cotta Community Centre will host a golf tournament and fundraiser at the Piper's Heath Golf Course, 5501 Trafalgar Road in Oakville, and a dinner banquet on the terrace of the Terra Cotta Inn, 175 King St., Terra Cotta Thursday, August 14.

This is a fundraiser for the restoration of the volunteer-run community centre. Restoration is expected to start later this year. The project has received \$100,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and organizers have raised another \$50,000 to date.

The tournament fee is \$150/golfer or \$600/foursome. Register by calling 1-877-354-7849, ext. 709. Hole-in-one prizes include a Palm Beach golf vacation and an all-inclusive trip for two to Cuba.

If you would like to attend the dinner banquet only, call Yvonne, 905-702-0480, gpsanchez@rogers.com or Sylvie, 905-873-9752, Sylvie.budenas@rogers.com.



The fifth annual Off the Wall and Open Door Youth Centres golf tournament will begin at 7 a.m. with a shotgun start at GolfNorth Acton. Cost is \$90 per player for 18 holes of golf, cart and a barbecue lunch. Community heroes are needed to sponsor a youth to attend and play (\$90). You can also assist by sponsoring a hole for \$50, or donating a prize or raffle item. Tax receipts are available for sponsorships and donations. All funds raised go to the Youth Centres. Contact Amanda Kostjuk or Judy Robinson at 519-853-9825.

Fore the Animals golf tournament to aid the Upper Credit Humane Society will be held at the Caledon Country Club on Monday, Sept. 8. Registration, driving range and putting contest opens at 10 a.m.; shotgun start, scramble format at 12:30 p.m. Cocktail reception, gourmet dinner and silent auction, followed by awards and prize ceremony, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Golf and dinner package (per golfer), \$170; dinner only (per person), \$50. Contact Upper Credit Humane Society, 519-833-2287 for more information.

The 13th annual Community Living North Halton charity golf tournament will be held Tuesday, Sept. 16 at Eagle Ridge Golf Club in Georgetown.

Entry fee is \$175 per golfer which includes cart, lunch and dinner. The cost for dinner only is \$45.

Proceeds go to the CLNH's Saturday Centre, a respite program for school-aged children with developmental disabilities.

For information contact Kathleen Hayward at 905-878-2337 ext. 22.