

Using heat therapy helps to relax muscles and stimulate circulation, and thereby decrease pain. It may be helpful to apply heat before doing stretching exercises, as it warms the muscles and helps them stretch.

There are various methods of using heat therapy:

- 1.** Some people like to use gel packs or bags stuffed with grain to apply heat. Follow carefully the instructions provided with them.
- 2.** Others prefer to use a hot water bottle, partly filled so that it is not too heavy, wrapped in a thin towel to avoid burning the skin.
- 3.** Another method is using a heating pad. Be careful to use a low setting to avoid burning the skin. Do not lie on the heating pad and do not fall asleep while using it. Do not use the heat for more than 20 minutes. You may want to set a timer to remind you to remove the heat. Do not reapply the heat until the effect of the heat has disappeared.
- 4.** To treat the hands, some people use the oil and glove routine as follows: Apply mineral oil or vaseline petroleum jelly generously over hands and wrists. Put on a pair of rubber gloves and soak hands 10 – 15 minutes in hot water.
- 5.** Another option to treat hands and feet: put 8 cups of dry lentils in a microwave safe container. Place in microwave for approximately 2 minutes, stirring after 1 minute. Remove from microwave and stir again. Test to make sure it is not too hot. Then put hands in lentils for 15 minutes or less if it becomes too hot.

Caution

- Do not use any source of heat after using analgesic rubs or lotions.
- Do not reapply the heat until the treated area has returned to normal temperature.
- Before using any source of heat, be sure that the skin is healthy. If you have circulatory or sensory problems, consult your doctor or therapist before applying heat to any body surface.
- If you have hot, swollen joints, heat may not be helpful and ice may be more beneficial.
- Check and monitor skin to prevent burns.