

Using cold therapy can help to reduce pain, inflammation and swelling and may be especially helpful during a flare when you have hot, swollen joints.

There are various methods of using cold therapy:

- 1.** Some people like to use cold gel packs, frozen vegetables (such as peas), or bags stuffed with grain. These should be kept in the freezer until needed. Do not apply the cold source directly to the skin as ice can burn you. Make sure that there is some material such as clothing or a thin, (moist if desired) towel between the cold and the skin.
 - a. Do not eat the thawed and refrozen vegetables as they could make you sick.
 - b. Apply cold for 10 to 15 minute intervals and repeat as often as you feel necessary.
- 2.** To treat one or two small joints such as fingers, use an ice cube in a small plastic bag or wrapped in a thin, moist cloth and rub it around the joint(s) for 5 minutes.
- 3.** Another way to apply cold is to soak hands in cold water for 3 to 4 minutes. Some people like to use contrasts baths. To do this, dip the hands alternately into a tub of hot and a tub of cold water, each for ½ to 2 minutes. Continue the contrasts baths for 10-15 minutes. Do not use extreme temperatures. This method may also be useful for feet and ankles.
- 4.** Some people like to use ointments which can be rubbed onto the skin to produce a cold feeling. Do not wrap the area or use splints immediately following the application of ointments. Do not use any source of cold after using analgesic rubs or lotions.

Caution

- Before using any source of cold therapy, be sure that the skin is healthy. For safety, check the skin for redness or white areas every few minutes and stop the treatment if such areas develop.
- If pain or discomfort increase with the use of cold, do not continue.
- If you have Raynaud's phenomenon, white hands or your hands change colour from white to blue to red, do not use cold. Consult your doctor or therapist before using ice.