

ICED VULNERABILITY

Can ice therapy cause injury?



ICING AN INJURED AREA IS A COMMON, EFFECTIVE TREATMENT. BUT COULD IT LEAVE YOU VULNERABLE TO FURTHER INJURY?

Icing an injured area is an effective means to control pain and aid in the healing process. Many athletes resort to ice treatments for acute injuries they incur during practice and competition. Scientists call the application of ice or cold water baths cryotherapy. It is an effective first-step treatment for most injuries because it limits inflammation and pain by cooling down all the tissues to which it is applied, including tissues deep below the surface. Thus, the skin, muscles, tendons, ligaments, and nerves all feel the impact of the sudden cool-down. A major consideration, however, is what effect this cool-down might have on reaction time and muscle contraction capabilities. This is of particular concern if you have just hurt yourself, you are applying ice treatment, and you intend to finish your training session or competition. To what extent might the cooled tissues lose function? And will that in turn set you up for an even more severe injury?

Power Key: cryotherapy, performance, reaction time