

## Do's and Don'ts for Icing Injuries

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It's the medical recommendation runners get most often. Injured knee? Ice it. Sore shin? Ice it. Good advice. Ice can decrease pain and inflammation and enhance healing. But if you do it wrong, you could damage surrounding muscle tissues, says Joseph Dykstra, M.A., assistant athletic trainer at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. So here's a guide that will make icing crystal clear.

### **Don't: Ice Before You Run**

Numbing a body part before running can block signals to your brain that would tell you to back off. This may cause you to alter your gait, increasing injury risk.

### **Do: Apply Ice ASAP After a Run**

Whether you suffer an acute injury or have a chronic issue, ice the area as soon as you get home. When applied immediately, ice decreases swelling and initiates healing.

### **Don't: Leave It on Too Long**

Don't ice for more than 20 minutes or you'll risk frostbite. If your skin looks red, it's a warning sign you're pushing it. Remove the ice once you feel numbness.

### **Do: Leave It on for Long Enough**

"If you ice less than 10 minutes, you'll cool your skin, but there will be minimal effect on underlying muscle tissue," Dykstra says. "Fifteen to 20 minutes is ideal."

### **Don't: Call It Quits After One Day**

An injury benefits from ice in the days following the trauma. But if your symptoms worsen, or if your knee has been nagging you since, uh, the Ice Age, see a doctor.

### **Do: Continue Icing During the Day**

To maximize the benefits, ice five times a day, with at least 45 minutes in between applications. This keeps tissue temperature low to minimize inflammation.