



Contrast Hydrotherapy

Purpose:

To decrease inflammation and speed healing after an injury. This is not for use on acute injuries (within 24 hours) but is good for supporting chronic or subacute injuries.

Action:

Alternating heat and cold causes dilation and contraction of small blood vessels on the surface of the skin and is thought to do the same for the underlying tissues. This acts as a pump to bring in fresh nutrient rich blood and then to move out fluids to carry away waste products.

Technique:

Use alternating moist heat and cold. This can be used with towels soaked in hot or cold water or using a bath or shower. The hot water/towel should be quite hot but not enough that scalds or is uncomfortable. The cold should be enough that it is a bit shocking. Start with 3 minutes hot and switch to 30 seconds cold. Always end with a cycle of cold, as this will decrease inflammation.

Cautions:

Do not apply to the chest of an asthmatic person as the shock of cold can trigger an attack. Do not use on open skin. If elderly or with poor circulation use less dramatic changes in water temperatures: warm to cool vs. very hot to cold.

Check with your health care provider to rule out underlying injury prior to starting treatment.