

The 10/10/10 Protocol

Whether it's a sporting accident or a slip on a wet floor, injuries happen all the time whether we are prepared for them or not. Many people know to turn to ice when body parts, such as ankles or knees, begin to swell. But do you know when to put the ice on and when to take it off? Or what happens when you leave the ice on for too long? The 10/10/10 protocol is your go-to-guide for icing an injury. Here we will explain exactly what you need to know to carry out this procedure and why it is so important you do it this way.



What is it?

10/10/10 stands for:

- 10 minutes ice on
- 10 minutes ice off
- 10 minutes ice on

Why is it so important?

The purpose of applying ice to an injury is to decrease swelling. The cold ice constricts the blood vessels, limiting the amount of blood that is transported to the injury.

If an ice pack is left on for more than 10 minutes, a reflex reaction (called the Hunting Reflex) will kick in as an attempt to protect the body's tissues from injury due to cold. Blood vessels will dilate and allow blood to be pumped to the site of injury, causing further swelling and perhaps even scar tissue.

How do you apply the ice?

The preferred method of application is to place crushed up ice cubes in a dripping wet cloth bag. This method has been shown to be safe and effective for maintaining a constant temperature without frostbite. Reusable gel packs may also be used; however you must be careful of frostbite if the temperature between the pack and the skin falls below 0 degrees C.

Why is the 10/10/10 protocol so effective?

The effectiveness of this procedure is due to:

- The cumulative ice time of 20 minutes
- The "off time" of 10 minutes ensures the skin temperature remains below 20 degrees C, providing a lower starting point for the second application of ice
- The lower skin temperature achieved after the second icing