



## Home Modalities

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**Only perform these as directed by the physician or hand therapist. To help us better assist you with symptom management, please feel free to share information about other medical conditions you have that cause sensitivity to hot or cold.**

### COLD

Your swelling and pain can be helped by applying cold to the area on your body that is affected by these problems. You want to have the part you are applying cold to become numb. It will be uncomfortable at first. If this happens, keep icing as you are able, even taking the cold off and on in order to tolerate complete numbing of the area.

- **Cold Water Soak:** Fill a basin\* with cold water to immerse your fingers, hand, and wrist. Do this for 5–10 minutes.
- **Ice Massage:** Use an ice cube with one end wrapped in a paper towel and apply the exposed ice to your injured area for 5–10 minutes as tolerated. You can also try a small paper Dixie cup with frozen water in it. Tear off the lip of the cup to expose the ice when you are ready to apply it to your skin.

**Warning!** Monitor your time with cold therapy. Watch out for white skin. Red skin is OK.

\*Basin can be a sink, kitty litter box, dish basin, pitcher of water, or small trash can.

### HEAT

Your stiffness and soreness can be helped by applying heat to the area on your body that is affected by these problems. Be careful to recognize if you have inflammation, which will involve redness and throbbing-type pain. Inflammation typically does not respond well to heat, even if it “feels good.” Heat loosens up your muscles for stretching and exercises.

- **Hot Water Soak:** Fill a basin\* with bath-temperature water to immerse your fingers, hand, and wrist. Do this for 5–10 minutes.
- **Hot Pack:** Moist hot packs that emit heat and moisture are helpful. Many commercial hot packs can have a moisture component, so look at the directions. You can make a moist hot pack 2 ways:
  - Place a wet washcloth between your body and your hot pack (Do not use an electric one).
  - A sweat sock filled with uncooked rice works well when heated in the microwave for 30 seconds to 2 minutes. Remember to tie a knot at the end of the sock.
- **Paraffin:** Many people use a paraffin machine at home. It is warm wax with essential oils to prevent burns. Follow the manufacturer’s directions. In therapy, we typically perform 6–10 dips for heat and wrap your hand in a towel.

**Warning!** Watch out for very red skin. Monitor your time with heat therapy. Look for burns if you have any nerve issues. Also, do not use paraffin if you have open wounds.

\*Basin can be a sink, kitty litter box, dish basin, pitcher of water, or small trash can.