

Post Surgery Ice and Elevation

Following your surgery, swelling is to be expected. The presence of swelling can cause an increase in your pain and limit your range of motion. Taking steps to reduce the amount of swelling is important and these include the use of ice therapy and elevation.

Ice: Is your friend

- Use an ice pack or some form of cold therapy, such as a bag of frozen peas, to help reduce your swelling and assist you with the management of your pain.
- Ice therapy needs to be used for approximately 20 minutes at a time to be the most effective.
- Using ice 5 – 6 times per day for the first few days will be very beneficial to you. This has been found to significantly reduce swelling and discomfort. After the initial post-operative period aiming to use the ice 3 – 4 times daily and getting into a routine for eg after breakfast, lunch and dinner and before going to bed at night would be beneficial.
- **DO NOT** place the ice pack directly on the skin without wrapping it in something like a tea towel as it can result in an ice burn to your skin.



Elevation:

- Try to alleviate your discomfort as much as possible by resting in the initial period until your first post-operative appointment.
- If you have had joint replacement surgery **DO NOT** place a pillow **behind your knee** as you do not want your knee in a bent position as straightening your knee is the aim. Be mindful that whilst elevating your leg on a recliner chair is good for swelling management and comfort it is not as good for straightening the knee after joint replacement and therefore dedicated time should be spent performing your leg straightening exercises.
- If you have had surgery on your foot or ankle elevation above the level of your heart is recommended to decrease the amount of swelling that can occur. This can be accomplished by resting your leg on more than one pillow as shown below.



- Remember – when you have your foot or hand down fluid will gather in the lowest point and your foot or hand can swell and may also change colour. **THIS IS NORMAL.** However, if this swelling does not subside with elevation you may need to seek medical advice. Swelling will generally be reduced in the morning and with activity will increase during the day. Post surgery bruising can also occur down your leg and to your foot as gravity influences the pattern of bruising.



- You may find that swelling may occur at the end of the day for some time after your surgery. This can continue to occur for approximately three months for minor surgery and up to 12 months after more major surgeries especially joint replacement surgery. Elevation at the end of the day while resting can help relieve this.

