LET'S TALK ABOUT PAIN RELIEF

Even when we know that the right exercise is the right way to help musculoskeletal pain in the long run, sometimes the pain just gets in the way and more immediate help is needed. There are several ways your rheumatologist or physical therapist can provide that help. All of these treatments are available at the Arthritis Treatment Center. You may also be instructed to do others, such as moist heat or ice packs, at home.

MOIST HEAT

Muscle tightness or spasm often accompanies painful conditions. Heat treatments can make it easier to exercise. These are soothing, comfortable ways to warm and relax muscles in painful areas and to improve circulation to those areas. Heat should be applied no longer than 20 minutes at a time.

ICE PACKS

Ice is used to relieve joint pain and reduce swelling. This helps relax muscles and relieve stiffness. With proper ice application you will feel a cooling sensation followed by a few minutes of a mild burning, aching feeling before the numbness sets in and the ice does its work. Sometimes heat and ice are alternated to maximize the effect. Ice packs should be applied for only 10 minutes at a time.

ULTRASOUND

Through painless, high frequency sound waves, ultrasound provides deep warming to the painful tissues below the skin’s surface. Although you may feel the warmth on your skin, its effects go much deeper, increasing the circulation to and relaxing the deep muscles.
By overstimulating pain-producing nerves, TENS acts as a pain barrier. A tiny amount of electrical energy is applied through small pads placed against the painful area, producing a tingling sensation. As a result, activity can be maintained without the limitations imposed by a chronic painful condition.

**Iontophoresis**

Iontophoresis is used to decrease inflammation and pain. This treatment uses an electric current to drive an anti-inflammatory medication (dexamethasone), which is applied to a pad, through the skin into the inflamed tissues. Treatments are administered three times a week for up to three weeks.

**Diathermy**

While “Short-wave diathermy” may sound like something out of science fiction, doctors and therapists use the diathermy produced by high-frequency current to treat arthritis. The electromagnetic waves penetrate tissue more deeply and intensely than other types of heat treatments, such as hot packs or ultrasound. It not only feels good, but reduces the pain and swelling associated with inflammatory musculoskeletal conditions.

Advances in equipment design now make it possible to treat patients safely with applications three to five times a week, depending on the severity of pain and swelling. During a diathermy treatment, which may last from 20-30 minutes, the therapist will place a towel over the affected area to absorb perspiration and to eliminate air spaces between your body and the diathermy head, reducing the possibility of burns.