



**ANIMAL SURGICAL CLINIC**  
of SEATTLE

A Better Way To Operate + Since 1986

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## ICE PACKING

### WHY ICE?

Inflammation associated with surgery or trauma causes an increase in blood flow to the area that is injured. This is seen as redness and swelling. Swelling can be very painful, and can lead to delayed wound healing and restricted motion of the area. Cold temperatures (ice) cause blood vessels to constrict, thus limiting the amount of blood flow to an area and decreasing swelling. When ice is combined with compression, significant decreases in swelling can be seen. Cold temperatures also numb the area to which they are applied, thus decreasing the sensation of pain.

### WHEN TO ICE?

Icing is usually recommended during the acute inflammatory phase of healing, which typically lasts 3 days. However, icing can be used for longer periods of time if swelling and pain are present. **Following surgery, we recommend applying ice to the incision and surrounding area every 4-6 hours for 15-20 minutes, for the first 3 days** or until swelling is resolved. Icing is also very helpful for chronic injuries, such as arthritis. Ice should be applied to **arthritic joints for 15-20 minutes following any sort of exercise** to decrease pain.

### HOW TO MAKE AN ICE PACK:

Commercial ice packs can be used; however, we find the following to be cheap, easy, and easily conformed to an animal's body.

Mix **2 parts water to 1 part isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol** in a zip-loc bag and freeze.

- ▶ We recommend double bagging to decrease risk of leaking.
- ▶ Small or large bags can be used depending on the size of the treatment area.
- ▶ This makes a slushy-like consistency that can be conformed to any body part.

### HOW TO APPLY AN ICE PACK:

Place a towel over the area to be iced. Then place the slushy ice bag over the area. The bag can either be wrapped onto the leg using an ace bandage (not too tight!) or a dry towel can be placed over the ice pack.

- ▶ The ice pack should NEVER be applied directly to an animal's skin.
- ▶ Do not leave your animal unattended while being iced.
- ▶ Do not leave the ice pack in place for longer than 20 minutes.