

Take Home Instructions: *Heat Therapy*

What is heat therapy?

Heat therapy is the application of heat to relieve pain, reduce stiffness, and reduce muscle spasms. It also increases muscle relaxation, blood flow, and tissue flexibility.¹ Heat therapy is usually administered for chronic conditions or after the initial inflammatory stage of a muscle injury.

Why is heat therapy prescribed?

Heat therapy is often used to improve range of motion during physical activity. Heat therapy is also a good treatment option for the temporary relief of chronic arthritis.

Where can I apply heat therapy?

Heat therapy can be applied to any location on your pet's body. It is most commonly used on joints, such as the shoulders, elbows, hips, or knees.

What can I use for heat therapy?

Commercial hot packs are the best option for use at home. These packs can be purchased from local sporting goods stores. Commercial heat wraps are also available.

When do I apply heat therapy?

Apply heat therapy after the first 24 to 72 hours following an injury. During this initial period in the healing process cold therapy works best. Do not apply heat therapy if your pet still shows signs of swelling. Heat therapy can also be used when a pet shows signs of stiffness or pain from chronic arthritis.¹

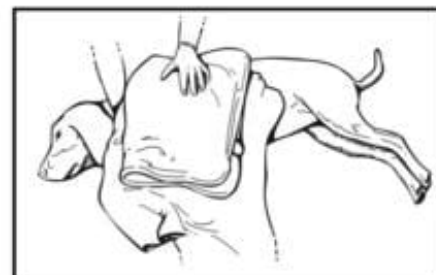
How do I prepare the heat pack?

For gel packs and heat wraps, follow the manufacturer's instructions on the package. Most commercial packs include a thermometer to aid in heat times. The maximum amount of heat that should be used is 45°C (113°F).¹ Use the heat pack immediately after heating. Heat packs and wraps retain their heat for approximately 30 minutes.

What are the treatment guidelines?

Place thick padding, such as a towel, on your pet's skin and then place the heat pack on top of the padding. This padding helps to prevent damage to the skin. Hold the pack in place with your hand. Leave the pack in place for 15-20 minutes or until the skin is warm to the touch.² Check the skin every 5 minutes for redness.

Discontinue therapy if your pet shows any sign of discomfort. Never leave your pet unattended with any type of heat pack to prevent accidental ingestion.



Use a towel or thin blanket between your pet's skin and the heat pack to prevent damage to the skin. Hold the heat pack in place with your hand.

1. Millis DL, Levine D, Taylor RA. *Canine Rehabilitation & Physical Therapy*. St Louis. 2004. Saunders. pp 286, 423.

2. Steiss, Janet. Levine, David. Physical Agent Modalities. *Veterinary Clinics of North America (Small Animal Practice)*. 35-6; November 2005.

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