



SCR OEC6 Changes

Central Division
South Central Region

Application of Ice



This topic is one of those changes that came with the 6th edition and the following represents excerpts from page 418 of the current OEC manual.

The new guideline is that when called for, you should **“ice the injury for 5 minutes at a time and then leave it off for at least 30 minutes”**. This allows the blood flow to return to the injured area.

The previous guideline was 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off. The application of ice was part of the old RICES protocol, initially developed in the 1970s by Dr. G. Mirkin, for treating soft-tissue contusions. More on the new RISE vs the old RICES protocol is covered in a separate article.

“In 2019, Dr. Mirkin modified his opinion about ice. Ice or cooling works by decreasing the blood flow to an area, preventing swelling and inflammation. In the 1970s we knew very little about the healing process. We did not understand that inflammation is actually a very important part of the healing process. Blood vessels in an injured area dilate, causing swelling and warmth. The increase in blood flow brings in very potent chemicals, proteins, and cells. Those chemicals and cells cause inflammation, initiating the healing process, and tissue repair begins”.



Cloth between ice and skin

“Applying ice initially makes an injured area feel better, by the numbing effect. Using ice immediately following an injury and for several hours is acceptable”.

As with the previous protocol, “always put cloth between the ice and the skin, so you do not freeze the tissue. After a few hours, the ice will no longer be effective in managing the pain and should be avoided”.

For further information, see our OEC 6th edition bulletin on the change from RICES to RISE, or reference page 418 and 419 of the OEC 6th edition manual.

Since its origins in 1939 as “Ski Safety and First Aid”, today’s Outdoor Emergency Care has come a long way. The OEC curricula has continually evolved as new medical information becomes available. OEC is written following the principle of *evidence-based medicine*, and thus the changes that come with each new edition. The source for the content in this bulletin is the 6th edition of Outdoor Emergency Care manual.