

# Inflammation – Part III

Welcome to this multi-part series on inflammation. Here we will discuss what inflammation is, why it's important and what we should do about it.

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Inflammation is painful and uncomfortable. Strategies have been developed to reduce inflammation, and by extension, to reduce pain.

Icing is one of the most common techniques used to reduce inflammation. Icing causes constriction of the blood vessels, which can reduce the degree of swelling and dampen the inflammatory process. Icing, either by directly applying ice to the skin or via an ice bath, has been proven to reduce pain after an injury such as an ankle sprain. It also reduces delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS). Many athletes will routinely use an ice bath after every hard workout. But is this best practice?

Most experts will agree that ice is a good idea during the initial 48hrs post-injury when swelling can be excessive. By reducing the swelling, ice helps to prevent damage to the surrounding healthy tissue. Many health professionals will recommend alternating hot and cold, a practice known as contrast therapy. The ice reduces the swelling, but the heat brings blood and nutrients to the area.

Icing as a strategy for pain relief from DOMS is not supported as a regular practice, and some experts argue it could even be harmful. By dampening the inflammation process it could, in theory, reduce the physiological adaptations to training. Regular use of ice could potentially reduce strength gains and increase the risk for overuse injury.

You can read more about the ice controversy [here](#).

NSAIDs are also effective in reducing inflammation and pain. Use of NSAIDs is widespread in the athletic and first aid communities. We will discuss NSAIDs in depth in part IV of this series.

## ACUTE INJURY MANAGEMENT ACRONYM CHANGES

