

HOT AND COLD COMPRESSES

COLD COMPRESSES

Frozen green peas in a Zip-lock freezer bag over a damp facecloth make a great cold compress. For best effect, keep the compress on constantly, but change the bags of peas every 20-30 minutes as the peas warm up. For application to both eyes, four to six bags of peas are usually sufficient to rotate through the freezer. Ice cubes or ice chips can be used, but ice should be applied for only about 20 minutes each hour, as it may cool too much if applied constantly. A damp cloth helps to transmit the cold temperature more effectively. In general, cold compresses are applied for only the first 48 hours. The purpose of cold is to cause blood vessels to spasm. This decreases the degree of swelling immediately after tissue injury.

WARM AND HOT COMPRESSES

After 48 hours of cold compresses, switch to warm compresses. These should be applied for 10-20 minutes at a time, 5-10 times each day. The more warm compresses you apply, the faster your bruises will vanish.

Several options have been popular with our patients:

1. Hot Potato or Apple

Bake a potato in a conventional oven for 15-20 minutes at 350 degrees. Take the potato out, punch holes in it with a fork, and store it in the refrigerator. When the hot compress is desired, microwave the potato. It should be hot, but not so hot that it is uncomfortable to hold in a bare hand. Wrap a damp facecloth around the potato and apply. This makes a great compress for 10-20 minutes, depending upon the size of the potato. Some like to use mashed potatoes in a plastic bag.

2. Rice in a Sock

Fill a clean, all-cotton sock with raw rice. Microwave to desired temperature. This is a good source of dry heat. Caution: socks that are not 100% cotton may melt or burn at relatively low temperatures.

3. Tea Bags

Multiple tea bags (used are fine) can be dampened and stacked on a saucer. Soak the bags with water and microwave. Be Careful! It is easy to over-heat the bags and burn yourself. Although a single tea bag may not stay warm very long, two or three stacked over each eye usually does well for 10 minutes.

4. Rolled Facecloth

A dampened facecloth can be carried around in a plastic bag. When ready to be used, the facecloth can be microwaved. A more tightly rolled facecloth will hold the heat longer. This usually provides good warmth for about 3-5 minutes.