

# VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

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*Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery*

## **Misconception - put ice on it**

Many doctors recommend ice on a sprained ankle, some say warm the area with moist heat. Others will have you wrap it in an Ace® bandage to keep it from swelling. My advice is to keep it at room temperature without any ice or warming. Also the area must be elevated and you should stay off of it.

Swelling results from injuries. Ice on the area will constrict the blood vessels of the skin and decrease circulation to the injured area. This area needs circulation to heal. Ice may stun the nerve endings so the injury is not as painful but the diminished circulation may be harmful. Also the body works to repair itself best at 98 degrees not at cooler or at warmer temperatures.

Heat or ice is known to injure tissues and could possibly worsen the injury. Part of the problem is that a little warmth or a little cooling will probably not hurt anything. But ice cold or hot temperatures are cleanly detrimental to human tissues. People tend to overdo things. If a little cooling is good then a lot of cooling or icing is better. This is a fallacy in reasoning.

Wraps or bandages are used to keep swelling down. These may be harmful. Wrapped bandages may act as a tourniquet. This is bad. Also the bandage may be applied with the appropriate amount of pressure at first but may tighten too much as the swelling increases over the first day or so. Edema may take a day or two to maximize.

Elevation helps to reduce or minimize swelling without the adverse effects of heat, ice or wrapping. Many patients think that they have to get that ankle into the air as high as possible. Here again people think that if a little is good a lot is better. You do not have to hang upside down from the ceiling for your ankle injury. One needs only to elevate the injured part to the level of the heart. When lying in bed you do not need more pillows to get that ankle higher. Whether in bed on your back, stomach or side your ankle is at about the same level as your heart. This is good enough.

Sometimes dependency is good. Some patients of mine have poor arterial circulation but the veins work well. Blood cannot get down to the injured leg because of the arterial blockage. But the venous blood flows normally back to the heart. In this case it may be better to keep the leg down. It may actually become painful when elevated because the blood needs the help of gravity to get down to that leg wound.

A wrap type bandage should probably never be used on a person with poor arterial circulation. The minimal blood flow will further be reduced. Bandaging is an art. Skill is needed to apply these appropriately. I have seen numerous injuries worsened from improper use of wraps and bandaging.

Treatments vary even between doctors. I do not believe in heating or cooling injured areas. I prefer to leave things at normal body temperatures. I recommend elevation of injured areas most of the time to minimize swelling. Ace bandages and similar wraps should only be applied by those skilled in their proper application.

**The above represents the opinion of A. E. Haas, M.D.**

**Venice Plastic Surgery, Venice Wound Center, Lakeside Medical Center**

**Just call us directly. No referral needed unless required by your insurance company**

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