Ice Cube Massage

**Indications** - This technique can provide pain relief and promote healing of soft tissues including tendons, ligaments, and muscles that are afflicted with injury inflammation, and scar tissue.

**Mechanism of Action** - Cold therapy provided by ice massage can greatly reduce tissue inflammation - much more effective than anti-inflammatory medication taken by mouth, and obviously with less side effects. Cold therapy also promotes tissue healing - the cold causes initial vasoconstriction (decreased blood flow) then subsequent vasodilatation (increased blood flow as the tissues rewarm), and this increased blood flow helps the healing response.

**Ice Cube Massage Procedure:**

1. Find the area of injury that has maximum tenderness.

2. Hold a single ice cube in your hand with a wash cloth or dish rag.

3. Apply the end of the ice cube directly to the skin over the tender area. Rub the ice in a small circle to cover the entire tender area. Pressure should be firm but not heavy.

4. Initially the skin feels very cold, then it will start to burn a little, then you will feel some aching, and finally the skin will feel numb. Keep rubbing until the cold travels deep into the affected tissue and the tissue is no longer tender when you press on it. This can take 5-10 minutes. By this time the skin should be pink.

5. Blot up the melting water with a towel.

6. Avoid ice massage directly over bony prominences.

7. Frequency of treatments: once per day is fine for chronic conditions (eg. tennis elbow). They can be done more often for acute injuries, but do not exceed three times per day.