

# Heat Therapy For Pain

## How does heat therapy work?

When heat is applied to areas affected by pain, the surrounding blood vessels dilate to allow a rush of extra blood to the site. This blood carries various hormones and nutrients to the site that help relieve the physical and emotional symptoms of pain. These nutrients include much-needed oxygen — which flushes toxins from the site.

## Using Heat for Pain Relief

There are various products on the market aimed at providing pain relief with heat. Here are some options:



Pain patch directly onto skin



Pain patch on top of clothing

## Air-Activated Heat Patches

Air-activated heat patches can be applied directly to the skin (like Deep Heat and Nurofen patches), or over clothing (like FlexEze patches). These patches contain minerals that oxidise producing a thermal reaction — they become pleasantly warm and stay that way for about 8 hours. The Elastoplast Capsaicin Heat Patches contain capsaicin (derived from chilli peppers) and becomes quite hot. This particular patch is large and thin (like an A4 sheet of paper) with heat lasting for around 24 hours, providing excellent pain relief — if you can bear it! Heat patches come in different sizes, and are stocked by most supermarkets.

## Heat Therapy For Pain

---

### Instant Heat Gel Packs

Instant heat gel packs are re-useable and portable gel-filled packs that contain a metal disk floating in a solution of sodium acetate. When you “snap” this metal disk, it creates a chaotic reaction which causes the pad to heat up and solidify. This heat lasts for around an hour before the pad needs to be boiled to return to its jelly like state. These can be handy for emergency pain relief, as they’re small and light to carry.



Kathmandu Instant Gel



Microwaveable Lupin  
Heat Pack



Skyla Re-chargeable  
Hot Pack

### Hot Water Bottles and Heat Bags

Hot water bottles and heat packs are a cheaper alternative to instant gel packs. Heat bags are commonly filled with wheat, and heat up in the microwave. For those allergic to wheat products, it’s useful to know that there is an alternative! Lupin is a legume — much like a pea — that is used to fill heat bags. It weighs around 30% less than wheat and is also microwavable.

### Electric Hot Packs

Electric hot packs eliminate the need to lift a heavy kettle full of boiling water, as well as the effort of trying to direct a stream into a narrow opening! For example, the “Skyla” Electric hot pack takes 15 minutes to heat up, with heat that lasts for around three to four hours. The “Skyla” Hot Pack costs around \$30-\$40, and can be purchased from chemists.



RSI & Overuse Injury Association of  
the ACT, Inc.

Building 1, Collett Pl,  
Pearce  
ACT 2607

Become a member at [www.rsi.org.au](http://www.rsi.org.au)

Phone: +61 459 906 204

Find us online...

Facebook: [@RSIACT](#)

Youtube: [RSI ACT](#)