

# Cold Laser Therapy for Arthritis

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*Cold laser therapy, also called low level laser therapy (LLLT), soft therapy and laser acupuncture, is used in the treatment of a variety of health conditions, and is now used to treat arthritis. This low-intensity laser therapy is said to reduce the pain and inflammation caused by arthritis. Arthritis has many variations, most commonly rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, but the symptoms of arthritis consistently involve swelling, stiffness and pain of the joints. [Have a question? Get an answer from a doctor now!](#)*

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## Significance

- Cold laser therapy, according to medical information provided by Spine-Health.com, has been used as an alternative pain relief method for over four decades by physicians worldwide. There have been more than 2,500 international clinical studies on cold laser therapy since 1967, most of which have proven this type of laser therapy to be effective for pain relief. This is particularly relevant for arthritis patients, since the arthritic inflammation is painful, and worsens over time.

## How Cold Laser Therapy Works

- Cold laser therapy is based on the process of light absorption into the cells, also known as photobiotherapy. This stimulates protein synthesis, as well as cell metabolism, improving cell health and ensuring proper cell functionality.

The lasers used in cold laser therapy are low-intensity, and are hardly comparable to laser types used in other treatments, which intentionally use heat and heat damage to be effective. Therefore, cold laser treatment poses no risk of cutting or burning on the treated skin area. Instead, wavelengths of

light interact with the tissue to stimulate the cells of the target area, and dramatically accelerate its healing process. This function helps eliminate inflammation and pain caused by arthritis. The absorption [rate](#) of the lasers is so low that cold laser treatment is safe and painless.

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## Procedure

- Cold laser therapy involves hand-held devices that emit nonthermal (meaning nonheated, hence "cold") photons of light that penetrate all the skin layers to the target area. Once the laser beam reaches its destination, it is absorbed by the cell, which has elements that interact with the light, transforming it into energy. The laser beam is aimed at the treatment area between 30 seconds and several minutes, depending on the severity and size of the condition. As the cells absorb the laser light, they supposedly respond to the activity by healing the damaged tissue, thereby reducing pain and inflammation.

## Advantages

- The technology of cold laser therapy uses such low-intensity laser beams that there is no risk for complications or side effects. The procedure is painless and has no downtime. Patients can return to their normal daily activities immediately after one treatment session.

## Disadvantages

- According to information reported by doctors on [Spine-Health.com](http://Spine-Health.com), patients are required to undergo eight to 30 treatment sessions in order to experience effectiveness. Patients often undergo cold therapy treatment two to four times per week.

While some major health insurance providers assist with payment of cold laser therapy, others consider it "alternative medicine" and will not contribute to costs. Neither will Medicare nor Medicaid cover cold laser therapy costs.

## Effectiveness

- A [study](#) conducted by medical researchers for the Journal of Rheumatology found that cold laser therapy is an effective treatment for short-term pain relief and morning stiffness of rheumatoid arthritis. The study concluded that cold laser treatment's effectiveness on other forms of arthritis is inconclusive, as results varied. This abstract also suggests that doctors should report the technique and device used to deliver cold laser therapy in order to record accurate, detailed information about this type of therapy's effectiveness on arthritic conditions.

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