

Cold Exposure & Recovery — Workbook

This workbook is your practical companion to the Cold Exposure & Recovery course. Use it to track your progressive cold-exposure practice, apply the science to your own context, and build habits that last beyond the four-week starter programme. Complete each section alongside its corresponding module — the exercises and worksheets are most useful when done in real time rather than retrospectively.

The Science of Cold — What Happens in Your Body

Anchor the key physiological concepts to your own observations and existing knowledge before you begin exposures.

Exercise: Cold Shock Self-Audit

Before your first intentional cold exposure, take a cold shower (as cold as your tap allows) for 30 seconds and observe your body's response. Do this within 24 hours of completing Module 1, then answer the prompts below.

- Describe your breathing in the first 10 seconds: did you gasp, hold your breath, or maintain nasal breathing?

- What happened to your heart rate — did it spike noticeably? Did it settle before the 30 seconds ended?

- What thoughts ran through your mind in the pre-entry moment and the first 10 seconds of cold contact?

- On a scale of 1–10, how would you rate the intensity of the experience — and how does that compare to what you expected beforehand?

Worksheet: Physiology Knowledge Anchor

Complete the fields below from memory after finishing Module 1 lessons. Do not re-read the material first — this is a retrieval exercise, not a test. Gaps reveal what to revisit.

Primary thermoreceptor channel activated by cold contact (TRPM what?)

Approximate % increase in norepinephrine during a cold immersion session (from Søbørg 2021)

How long does the dopamine elevation last post-immersion (in hours)?

What is the name of the mechanism by which BAT generates heat without shivering?

Name one condition that is an absolute contraindication for cold immersion

Why is passive rewarming (vs. hot shower) recommended for adaptation purposes?

Checklist: Before You Expose: Readiness Checklist

- I have read the full contraindications list and none apply to me (or I have confirmed with a physician)
- I have a waterproof thermometer available or ordered for Stage 3 and above
- I have identified a spotter or notified someone of my session timing plan
- I have completed the physiological sigh pre-immersion technique at least 3 times as a dry run
- I understand the difference between the cold shock response (dangerous if mismanaged) and hypothermia (not a realistic risk at proper durations)
- I know the five stop-the-session signals by heart and will act on them immediately

Safe Progressive Protocols — From Cool Showers to Ice Baths

Plan your 4-stage cold-exposure ladder, set up your equipment, and begin logging sessions from day one.

Exercise: My Cold Setup Decision

Use the setup comparison from Module 2 to decide which cold-exposure format is right for your current context. Answer the prompts to arrive at a concrete decision before Week 1 starts.

- What is the coldest temperature your shower reaches (measure or estimate in Celsius)? Is this sufficient for Stages 1–2?

• If you intend to progress to Stage 3 (cold bath), describe your specific plan: bathtub + ice, stock tank, chest freezer conversion, or commercial plunge. What is your timeline and budget?

• Who will be your designated contact or spotter for Stage 3 and above sessions?

• What time of day will you schedule sessions, and why (consider the dopamine timing discussion from Module 1)?

Worksheet: 4-Week Protocol Planner

Fill in your planned sessions for each week, then use the session log template (see Templates section) to track actuals. Cross out any session you skip and note the reason.

Week 1 — Stage and duration target (e.g., Stage 1: 60-sec cool shower finish, daily)

Week 1 — Days scheduled (circle: Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun)

Week 2 — Stage and duration target

Week 2 — Days scheduled (circle: Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun)

Week 3 — Stage and duration target

Week 3 — Days scheduled (circle: Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun)

Week 4 — Stage and duration target

Week 4 — Days scheduled (circle: Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun)

Advancement criterion reminder: breathing control score "e 4 on 3 consecutive sessions before stage change

Checklist: Breathing Protocol Mastery Checklist

- I can execute 3 physiological sighs smoothly without feeling lightheaded
- I can maintain box breathing at 3-3-3-3 for 90 seconds at rest without breaking the pattern
- I have practiced the pre-immersion sigh routine standing next to my cold setup at least twice before my first Stage 2 session
- I understand why hyperventilation rounds immediately before immersion are dangerous and will not do them
- I have timed my breathing during a cold shower and confirmed I am breathing through the nose for at least 80% of the duration
- I have the box breathing pattern written on a card visible from my plunge/bath as a cue for the first few weeks

Exercise: Rewarming Method Comparison

After your first cold bath session (Stage 3), try passive rewarming (dry clothes, no hot shower, allow natural shivering to resolve). The following week, try a single session followed by an immediate warm shower. Compare the two experiences by answering the prompts.

- Describe your energy and mood rating at 30 minutes post-session for passive rewarming vs. immediate warm shower

• How long did it take to feel fully rewarmed using each method?

• Which method felt more uncomfortable in the first 10 minutes post-session? Which felt better at 60 minutes?

• Based on your goals (adaptation vs. comfort), which rewarming method will you use as your default?

Cold for Recovery — When It Helps and When It Hurts

Map cold exposure to your actual training and recovery schedule so you use it strategically rather than habitually.

Worksheet: My Training Week and Cold Scheduling Map

Write out your typical training week in the fields below. Then for each session, decide whether cold exposure within 4 hours is appropriate based on your goal (adaptation vs. recovery).

Monday training session and goal (e.g., lower body strength — hypertrophy focus)

Monday: cold within 4 hrs appropriate? Y/N — reason

Tuesday training session and goal

Tuesday: cold within 4 hrs appropriate? Y/N — reason

Wednesday training session and goal

Wednesday: cold within 4 hrs appropriate? Y/N — reason

Thursday training session and goal

Thursday: cold within 4 hrs appropriate? Y/N — reason

Friday training session and goal

Friday: cold within 4 hrs appropriate? Y/N — reason

Saturday training session and goal

Saturday: cold within 4 hrs appropriate? Y/N — reason

Sunday (rest/active recovery)

My planned cold sessions for this week (days + timing relative to training)

Exercise: DOMS Tracking Experiment

Choose a workout you repeat regularly (e.g., leg day, long run). Complete the workout twice in the same week — once followed by cold immersion (10–15°C, 10 min) and once followed by active recovery (light walk). Rate DOMS at 24 hours and 48 hours after each. Answer the prompts.

• DOMS rating at 24 hours after cold immersion (0 = none, 10 = severe): _____. After active recovery: _____

• DOMS rating at 48 hours after cold immersion: _____. After active recovery: _____

• Did you notice any difference in next-session performance or readiness?

• Given your training goal for that session, was the DOMS reduction worth the potential adaptation trade-off?

Checklist: Contrast Therapy Session Checklist

I have chosen my contrast protocol level: Beginner (warm shower/cold shower) or Intermediate (warm bath/cold bath)

My hot water temperature is confirmed between 38–42°C (or sauna for advanced)

My cold water temperature is confirmed between 10–15°C with a thermometer

I have a timer set for each hot and cold phase

I am well-hydrated (at least 500 ml water in the 60 minutes before the session)

I will pause 10–20 seconds after exiting the hot phase before entering the cold to allow blood pressure to stabilise

I have a spotter or someone aware of my session timing

I know the stop-the-session signals and will act on them at any phase

Building a Sustainable Cold Practice — Habit, Mindset, and Safety

Design your ongoing cold-exposure habit and build the psychological tools to sustain it through resistance and difficult weeks.

Exercise: Pre-Session Resistance Journal

For five consecutive cold sessions, write in this journal immediately before you begin. The goal is to observe your avoidance thoughts objectively rather than act on them.

• What avoidance thoughts or rationalisations appeared before this session (e.g., "I'm too tired," "I'll do it tomorrow")?

• On a scale of 1–10, how strong was the urge to skip? Did you go ahead anyway?

• After the session: how does the pre-session anticipation compare to the actual experience?

- After 5 sessions: is there a pattern in when and why resistance peaks (day of week, time of day, training load)?

Worksheet: My Cold Habit Design Canvas

Use the cue-routine-reward framework to design your cold-exposure habit. Fill in every field to make the habit specific enough to execute without willpower.

My CUE (the specific trigger): time, place, or preceding action that will immediately precede my cold session

My ROUTINE: exact sequence from cue to stepping out of the cold (include setup, pre-immersion breathing, immersion, exit, rewarming)

My REWARD: what happens immediately after rewarming that I genuinely enjoy (coffee, favourite podcast, journaling, etc.)

My implementation intention sentence: "When [CUE], I will [ROUTINE], then [REWARD]"

My session frequency target (sessions/week) for the next 4 weeks

My 4-week outcome goal: what specific measurable result will tell me the habit is working?

Checklist: End-of-Programme Self-Assessment

- I completed at least 10 cold-exposure sessions in 4 weeks
- My breathing control score reached 4/5 or higher on the majority of recent sessions
- I can describe the difference between adaptive discomfort and a genuine stop-the-session signal
- I have reviewed my session log and can identify my best-performing time of day for cold exposure
- I have decided whether to continue at Stage 3, advance to Stage 4, or maintain at Stage 2 based on my goals and observations
- I know which of my training sessions should NOT be followed by cold immersion and why
- I have shared the contraindications list with anyone else in my household who may try cold exposure
- I can explain the core trade-off between cold for adaptation and cold for recovery to someone unfamiliar with the research

Your Action Plan

1. Complete the Cold Shock Self-Audit exercise (30-second cold shower) within 24 hours of finishing Module 1
2. Review the full contraindications list and consult a physician if any apply to you before proceeding
3. Acquire a waterproof thermometer and confirm your Stage 1-2 setup before Week 1 starts
4. Identify your designated spotter or session-notification contact for Stage 3 and above
5. Practise the physiological sigh and box-breathing techniques for 5 minutes daily for 3 days before your first scheduled session
6. Download and set up the Cold Exposure Session Log template (see Templates) and log every session from day one
7. Complete the 4-Week Protocol Planner worksheet and schedule sessions in your calendar as fixed appointments
8. After completing Week 2, review your session log and apply the progression criteria: advance only if breathing control score is 4+ on 3 consecutive sessions
9. At Week 3, complete the DOMS Tracking Experiment to calibrate cold timing relative to your

training goals

10. At end of Week 4, complete the End-of-Programme Self-Assessment checklist and set your ongoing maintenance target (2–4 sessions/week at your achieved stage)

