



Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center

PHYSICAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

PROCEDURE FOR THE APPLICATION OF MOIST HEAT

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PURPOSE: Procedure and precautions for the clinical application of moist heat will be clearly defined.

PROCEDURE:

1. Determine the need for and appropriateness of use of heat application for patient. Use extreme care when applying heat to areas where patient may have impaired sensation and/or limited mobility.
2. Examine and prepare area to be treated prior to treatment.
3. Contraindications for use such as but not limited to:
 - Impaired sensation
 - Acute inflammatory/edema
 - Thrombophlebitis
 - Malignancy
 - Impaired circulation
 - Impaired cognition
 - hemorrhage
4. Use caution with patients who have:
 - Impaired sensation
 - Impaired cognition
 - Malignancy
5. Precautions:
 - a. **DO NOT** place multiple heat sources on top of another.
 - b. **DO NOT** use toweling that is moist from previous use.
 - c. **DO NOT** use moist heat sources directly over cuts or abrasions.
 - d. **DO NOT** use moist heat after balms or liniments have been applied.
 - e. **DO NOT** lay the patient on the moist heat source. **Always** place the moist heat source on the patient.

6. Before removing Heat source from heating source, visually check thermometer reading of temperature to ensure that water temperature is within manufactures recommended temperature range.
7. Prepare heat source making sure to place at least six (6) layers of toweling in addition to the cover. Additional toweling may be needed in the presence of impaired circulation or thin skin, and for pediatric or elderly patients.
8. **Always** ask the patient to inform you if the moist heat source is too hot. Verbally reassess every 3-5 minutes and visually inspect skin every 10 minutes. Use care and special caution if patient has difficulty communicating, has impaired cognition or impaired sensation, and visually inspect skin for unusual redness after 3 minutes.
9. Use caution when treating a patient who has external hardware.
10. Apply heat source for **no** longer than 10-20 minutes.
11. After completing treatment, reassess patient's status and area treated by moist hot pack. Check area for blanching or blistering.
12. Document where and for how long heat source was applied, and patient's response at end of treatment.


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