

General instructions for applying compresses

Compress materials

Cloth sizes that have stood the test of time and can be used for all large parts of the body:

- **Inner cloth** (smooth cotton, folded double) ca. 28 cm wide
- **Intermediate cloth** (rough cotton, folded double, or terrycloth) ca. 32 cm wide
- **Outer cloth** (wool, flannelette or terrycloth bath towel) ca. 36 cm wide

A **length** of 140 cm is the same for all cloths.

The length for **child compresses** is one and a half times the upper body torso.

The **width** is measured from the waist to the armpit.

Old cotton cloths can be used for **oil compresses** and **poultices** (old handkerchiefs, dish towels, bed sheets torn to size).

After the treatment rinse the inner cloth in clear water and let the others dry. They can be reused repeatedly. Poultices are only used once.

Preparing the patient, the material and the room

Patient

- At least half an hour after the latest meal
- Empty the bladder before the treatment
- The feet must be warm, use a hot water bottle or foot bath if necessary (otherwise there is a danger that the warmth from the compress will rise to the head while the feet become even colder)
- Remove all restrictive clothing, watches, jewellery, etc.

Room Well ventilated, pleasantly warm, no draft, no background noise, no light shining directly into the eyes.

Materials Place everything that will be needed ready close by on the bed: a knee roll, a small cushion for the neck, compress utensils.

Hot water bottle: filled (not bulging) with hot water and emptied of air (= lay the hot water bottle on a table, holding the neck upright, so that all the air can escape).

Position Lying on the back if possible. Spread out the outer and intermediate cloths on the bed at the level of the body part to be treated. The patient lies down on them, the cloths are moulded up around the inner cloth one at a time.

Add a knee roll or whatever is needed and cover the patient, including the shoulders. Avoid constriction of the neck area. If the heart area feels constricted and/or the patient has difficulty breathing, leave the hands uncovered.

Place a small pillow under the neck. Now remove the hot water bottle from the feet if applicable. Cover the feet, also on the sides, but without pressure on the toes. Do not pull the blanket under the feet.

Temperature Moist-hot compresses: fan the body part with the hot cloth, then place it on the skin as hot as possible.

With fever of ca. 39°C or higher: select a compress solution 2°C cooler than the body temperature – it has a cooling effect.

Instruction for: Mustard Thorax Compress

Particularities

- No mustard compresses on reddened, diseased or irradiated skin!
- Light-skinned, blond and red-headed people have an especially strong and quick reaction to the irritation of mustard.
- The person giving the treatment remains with the patient until the start of the post-treatment rest because of the skin reaction that can start within a few minutes (burning, reddening – danger of burns!)
- Mustard powder should be stored protected from light in an airtight, cool container.

Materials

- Mustard powder (ground black mustard seeds) 2-4 tablespoons (depending on the size of the area to be treated)
- An inner cloth twice the size of the planned application area, paper towels (for "packing" the mustard mash), a terry cloth hand towel as an intermediate cloth (for protection from wetting), an outer cloth
- A small amount of warm water (max. 70°C)
- A large cup with a handle for stirring the mixture
- A wooden board

Applying the compress

- Lay out the inner cloth on the board and spread the paper towel on top
- Mix the mustard powder with the warm water to a spreadable consistency. Quickly apply it to half of the inner cloth/paper towel and fold it into a pack closed in on all sides. The lower surface of the pack with one layer each of cloth and paper is the side that is applied to the skin
- Lay the pack on the area of skin to be treated
Firmly and closely apply the intermediate and outer cloths to fix and cover the pack in place
- Keep a close watch on the skin reaction during the treatment (possibly briefly lifting the pack to look) – the aim is for the skin to begin to redden, so that it can be easily distinguished from the untreated skin. This effect can be expected within 2-12 minutes.
- When removing the pack possibly dab with skin with a moist-warm cloth. Remove all of the cloths
- With sensitive patients (children) apply some calendula baby oil to the skin a few hours later
- Post-treatment rest (30 minutes)

Follow-up

- Throw away the mustard mash and paper towels, rinse out the inner cloth
- The next mustard application can be done the next day at the earliest, and only if the reddening of the skin has subsided (possibly use oil or cream to take care of the area)