

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: **White Cabbage Compress**

Particularities

- The warmth of the cabbage application has to be adapted to the situation: more likely cool for acute inflammation, more likely pre-warmed for a weakened, chilled organism
- Pain may occur temporarily during the application

Materials

- Fresh white cabbage leaves (organic)
- Plastic tray
- Sharp knife
- Glass bottle as a roller, or a marble rolling pin
- For abdominal compresses: a hot water bottle, plastic bag (food-safe)
- Intermediate cloth (cotton)
- For abdominal compresses: outside cloth, thick flannelette cloth
- For joints: elastic or gauze bandage to fix the compress in place

Applying the compress

- Remove the outer leaves of the cabbage
- Remove thick leaf veins with the knife
- Place the leaves beside each other on the tray
- Roll across the leaves with the bottle until juice leaks out
- To warm up the cabbage leaves cover them with the plastic bag and place a hot water bottle on top. This is indicated for weak, chilled patients
- Place the outside and intermediate cloths ready at the level of the abdomen
- The patient lies down
- The cabbage leaves are placed overlapping like roof shingles on the area to be treated
- Mould the intermediate cloth over the leaves from both sides and then quickly wrap the outer cloth around everything, possibly fastening it with an adhesive bandage
- For a joint place the cabbage leaves around the joint and fix them in place with a bandage
- Duration of the treatment: 1-12 hours

Follow-up

- Dispose of the cabbage leaves
- Rinse off the treated area with lukewarm water
- Wrap the remaining cabbage head in a moist cloth and store it at room temperature