

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: Yarrow liver compress

Particularities

The time of day for the treatment depends on the indication

When applying this compress keep in mind that:

- the upper body usually tapers down to the waist
- this part of the body has to be able to move with the patient's breathing

This means that the compress cloths need to lie closely, without hampering the breathing: Guide the compress cloths diagonally up from the waist, mould them to the body with your hands, without an extra pull

Materials

- Outer cloth
- Intermediate cloth
- Inner cloth
- An aid for wringing out the hot compress: perhaps rubber gloves, a piece of cloth
- Hot water bottle filled hot, de-aired
- Medium-sized basin
- Yarrow tea: scald 1 tbsp. yarrow (leaves **with flowers**) with 1 litre of boiling water, let it steep for **only 3-5** minutes, then immediately strain into a thermos (it becomes greenish when left to stand). The colour of the compress solution is decidedly golden yellow to slightly green when it is ready.

Instructions

- Lay the outer and intermediate cloths onto the bed at the level of the upper abdomen
- The patient lies down on it
- Fold the inner cloth to liver size. Length: from the spine forwards to nearly the front middle. Width: from the umbilicus to the start of the chest
- Pour the compress solution into the basin
- Immerse the folded inner cloth in the compress solution, wring it out **well**. The patient turns his/her upper body slightly to the left. Initially fan the body with the hot cloth, until the heat is bearable, then place it on the liver, beginning at the spine and continuing to the front. The solar plexus and spine remain free.
- Mould the intermediate cloth over the inner cloth from each side, then quickly wrap the outer cloth around everything
- Place the hot water bottle on the right side, cover the patient, including the shoulders and feet
- After 30 minutes, remove the compress and the hot water bottle, cover this part of the body again (e.g., pull down the T-shirt that had been pushed up)
- Another 30 minutes of post-treatment rest

Follow-up

- If possible, the patient should stand up after the post-treatment rest. Exception: the compress precedes the night's rest.
- Rinse out the inner cloth and hang up all of the cloths to dry