

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: Horseradish sinus compress

Particularities

- Risk of burns (max. 1–2 minutes)
- Protect (cover) eyes!

Materials

- 1 folded paper handkerchief, cut through in the middle
- ½ teaspoon horseradish from a jar (not sulphurated, without cream) or freshly grated horseradish

Applying the compress

Cut a paper handkerchief or similarly sized cotton cloth in half and make two packets filled with half a teaspoon horseradish each. Place the packs so that the side with only one layer of paper lies on the skin. Place the compresses on the cheek bones to the left and right of the bridge of the nose. After a short time (approx. max. 2 minutes) the burning is so intense that the compresses have to be removed, otherwise damage to the nerve corpuscles in the skin can occur. Be sure to keep your eyes closed and do not rub them with horseradish-contaminated fingers.

The frontal sinuses can be treated in the same way at the same time.

Follow-up

Cover the treated areas with a small cotton cloth for 10 minutes to keep them warm. Discard the compresses.