

## General information for administering compresses

### Compress materials

Cloth sizes that are used for all large body parts that have proven themselves:

- **Inner cloth = substance cloth** (smooth cotton, double layered) width approx. 28 cm
- **Middle cloth** (rough cotton, double layered, or terry cloth) width approx. 32 cm
- **Outer cloth** (wool or molleton fabric, or terry cloth towel) width approx. 36 cm
- A **length** of 140 cm is the same for all cloths.

**Children's compresses** have a length of one and a half times their upper body circumference.

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

For **oil compresses** and **poultices** you can use old cotton cloths (old handkerchiefs, tea towels, sheets torn to size).

### Preparing the patient, room and materials

#### Patient

- At least half an hour after the last meal
- Empty the bladder before the treatment
- The feet must be warm! If necessary, warm them up with a hot water bottle or foot bath (otherwise there is a danger that the warmth coming from the compress will rise towards the head and the feet will become even colder).
- Remove all confining clothing parts, including watches, jewelry, etc.

**Room** Good ventilation, pleasantly warm, no draughts; no background noise; no direct incidence of light on the patient's eyes, this also applies to the post-treatment rest (see below).

**Materials** Everything that is needed for the application must be prepared beforehand and placed on the bed ready to use: knee roll, small pillow for the neck, compress utensils.

Hot-water bottle: filled (not bulging) with hot water, vented (= place the hot-water bottle flat on the table, hold the filler neck upright so that all the air can escape).

#### Positioning the patient and applying the compress

If possible, have the patient lie on their back. If necessary, elevate their upper body and support their arms. Lay out the outer and middle cloths on the bed at the height of the corresponding part of the body, have the patient lie on them, mold the cloths one after the other over the substance cloth.

Place the knee roll or similar, cover the patient, including their shoulders. Avoid constriction in the neck area. If the person feels constricted in the heart area and/or breathless, leave their hands uncovered.

Place a small pillow under their neck so that they do not have to hold their head themselves. Remove the hot-water bottle from their feet! Cover their feet, even from the sides, without putting pressure on their toes. Do not pull the blanket under their heels.

**Temperature** Hot moist compresses: fan the body part with the hot cloth, then apply as hot as possible.

Fevers from approx. 39°C: Choose a compress solution 2°C cooler than the body temperature; this has a cooling effect.

**Preparing tea** Pour 1 liter boiling water over 1 tablespoon of dried leaves, let steep for 3–5 minutes and strain into a thermos flask.

**Essential oils** 1 teaspoon in a cup of water or 1 tablespoon in approx. ½ liter of water

**Post-treatment rest** Every compress needs a rest afterwards. This is an essential part of the application and starts with the removal of the compress materials. As a rule, it is 30 minutes.

**Follow-up** After removing the cloths, rinse the inner cloth in clear water and hang them all up to dry. They can be reused several times. Poultice packs are only used once.

## **Instructions: Breastbone Compress with Lavender Essential Oil**

### **Materials**

- Mix a few drops of lavender essential oil into almond oil
- Cotton inner cloth, large enough to be folded 2–4 times and cover the patient's upper breastbone
- Freezer bag
- Hot water bottle
- Outer cloth (cotton or wool), somewhat larger than the folded inner cloth

### **Instructions**

- Drizzle the oil mixture onto the inner cloth, fold it, warm it up for a few minutes in a freezer bag on a warm hot water bottle
- Lay the warmed inner cloth onto the patient's breastbone and cover with the warm outer cloth
- The compress can remain for several hours
- If the application is short, follow it with 30 minutes of post-treatment rest

### **Evidence**

Has been used successfully on several patients in palliative care

### **Dosage**

Twice a day for 30 minutes or once a day for longer

### **Onset of effect**

Immediate

### **Length of therapy**

As needed