

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: Mustard Powder Calf Compress

Particularities

- Mustard powder should be stored protected from light in an airtight, cool container. Freshly ground mustard powder should be used as far as possible, as it quickly loses its effectiveness!
- Apply mustard only to intact, healthy skin!
- The application must be accompanied carefully by the practitioner because of the skin reaction (redness) to be expected after a few minutes. Late reactions are possible.
- The aim is an incipient reddening of the skin, so that the treated skin surface is visibly redder than the untreated skin. This effect can be expected within 2–12 minutes. The patient should experience the onset of intense burning on the skin. There are patients who do not feel the skin irritation and/or do not show any skin redness, but who can still burn. That is why it is necessary to pay close attention.

Materials

- 2 outer cloths (it is to be expected that the mustard will seep through the cloths, so that it is not recommended to use wool, as the wool will become hard and felty as a result)
- One terrycloth towel for each leg as intermediate cloths for moisture protection
- 2 inner cloths twice the size of the surface to be covered (10 cm x 10 cm)
- 2 kitchen towels, folded several times to the same size as the inner cloth (10 cm x 10 cm)
- Container to mix the mustard powder in
- Wooden spatula or spoon
- 2 hot-water bottles, covered with plastic
- Hot water
- Black mustard powder

Instructions

Prepare the mustard packs:

- Quickly mix the mustard powder with water to make a paste
- Place the kitchen paper on the inner cloth
- Spread the paste as thick as a knife's back on the kitchen paper and fold it into a pack together with the inner cloth. Place the two finished packs on the hot-water bottles (covered with plastic).
- Go to the patient with the packs

Wrap each leg one after the other:

- The patient lies on her back in bed
- Place the outer cloth, halved in length and rolled up from both sides, under her lower leg.
- Put the intermediate cloth, rolled up on both sides, on top
- Place the mustard pack on the intermediate cloth, leaving face up (to the calf) the side with only one layer of fabric
- Have the patient lay her leg on it
- Mold all the cloths one after the other around the leg
- Do the same for the other leg
- Cover the patient
- Duration as described above under "Particularities" (2–12 minutes)
- After removing the mustard packs and the intermediate cloth, dab the damp skin slightly with water. If the outer cloths are still dry, you can wrap the lower legs in them again for the post-treatment rest.
- 30 min. post-treatment rest

- There are situations in which it is advisable to then “extinguish” the local burning with a little oil (e.g., lavender oil), e.g., when treating children
- The burning sensation initially continues during the post-treatment rest and then gradually subsides

Follow-up

- Dispose of the mustard paste and kitchen paper
- Wash out all the cloths and hang them up to dry
- The next mustard application can be administered the next day at the earliest, or when the reddening of the skin has subsided

Evidence

Well-proven in many patients

Dosage

1 x daily

Onset of effect

Usually after 2–3 minutes, when the burning sensation begins

Length of therapy

- For asthma, usually once as an acute measure
- For other indications, both as a single application and over several days to weeks

Warning

Contraindications

- No mustard compresses on reddened, diseased or irradiated skin!
- Mustard intolerance

General Instructions for all mustard applications

- No treatment should last more than 20 minutes (danger of nerve damage to the skin, and necrosis)
- Exercise particular caution in cases of sensitive skin, sensory disturbances and lack of body perception