



<p>Team Name: Rehabilitation Services</p> <p>Team Lead: Regional Director- Rehabilitation Services</p> <p>Approved by: VP-Planning, Innovation, Quality, Safety &amp; Risk</p>	<p>Reference Number: CLI.6310.PL.001</p> <p>Program Area: Rehabilitation Services</p> <p>Policy Section: General</p>
<p>Issue Date: June 16, 2016</p> <p>Review Date:</p> <p>Revision Date:</p>	<p>Subject: Hot Pack Application</p>

**POLICY SUBJECT:**  
Hot Pack Application

**PURPOSE:**  
The therapist shall document the assessment of sensation and the location heat was applied.

**BOARD POLICY REFERENCE:**  
Executive Limitation (EL-2) Treatment of Clients

**POLICY:**  
The therapeutic application of heat shall be done with the recommendation of the Physiotherapist/Occupational Therapist who has assessed the patient, generally, and specifically the sensation in the area to be treated has been assessed.

**Indications**  
Moist heat is applied for relief of pain to decrease joint stiffness, accelerate healing and in the treatment of muscle spasms, mild inflammation, chronic edema, and adhesion.

**Contraindications**  
Moist heat cannot be used with severely impaired skin sensation or circulatory dysfunction, thrombophlebitis, some dermatological conditions, open wounds or infections, significant cognitive dysfunction, hypersensitive skin secondary to radiation therapy medication, or near a malignant tissue.

**Potential Complications**  
Burning can occur if hydrocollator temperature is excessive, toweling is insufficient or incorrectly applied or if skin sensation is inadequate.

## PROCEDURE:

1. Explain the reasons for application including indication and potential complications and obtain the patient's consent for treatment. Advise the patient they must indicate to staff if the heat becomes uncomfortable. Caution that burns are possible and that they must ask for extra towels or remove the heat if it becomes excessive.
2. Remove clothing and jewelry from area to be treated and inspect skin integrity.
3. Sensory test the area to be treated and document.
4. Wrap the hot pack in six to eight layers of dry towels. Hot pack covers, which come in various sizes to match the hot packs, can substitute for two to three layers of towels. More layers should be used if the towels or hot pack covers are old and have become thin or if the patient complains of feeling too warm during treatment. More layers of towels should be used if the hot pack is under the patient as towels are compressed; reducing insulation of the body, and the underlying table provides more insulation to the pack, causing it to cool more slowly.
5. Apply the wrapped hot pack to the treatment area and secure it.
6. Provide the patients with a bell or other means to call for assistance while the hot pack is on and instruct the patient to call immediately if he or she experiences any increase in discomfort. During application if the patient feels too hot, extra towels should be placed between the hot pack and the patient. If the patient does not feel hot enough, fewer layers of towels may be used at the next treatment session but should not be removed during correction application because the increased skin temperature may decrease the patient's thermal sensitivity and the ability to judge the tissue's heat tolerance accurately and safely.
7. After 5 minutes, check the patient's status and inspect the area being treated if indicated for excessive redness, blistering, or other signs of burning. Discontinue thermotherapy in the presence of signs of burning. If there are any signs of burning, brief application of a cold pack or an ice pack is recommended to curtail the inflammatory response.
8. After 20 minutes, remove the hot pack and inspect the treatment area. It is normal for the area to appear slightly red and to feel warm to the touch.
9. If evidence of burns are present, an Occurrence Form shall be completed as per as the Occurrence Reporting and Managing Critical Incidents, Critical Occurrences, Occurrences, and Near Misses policy (ORG.1810.PL.001).
10. If the application of heat is to be designated to staff without direct supervision of the therapist, there must be specific instructions for area to be covered, frequency, and timing on the patient chart.

## EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES:

Thermometer, daily log, hydrocollator

### Equipment Maintenance:

- Hydrocollators must be CSA approved and grounded
- In order to minimize the risk of burns from hot pack application, the temperature of the hydrocollators will be checked daily. The temperature should be between 71-74 C (160-165F).
- Temperature will be documented on a daily log form
- Biomedical will inspect hydrocollators annually
- Staff will ensure hot packs are fully covered with water and add water when required
- Hydrocollators shall be cleaned once a month or appropriately for the volume of use

## REFERENCES:

ORG.1810.PL.001 Occurrence Reporting and Managing Critical Incidents, Critical Occurrences, Occurrences and Near Misses

Chattanooga User Manual 2011, Moving Rehabilitation Forward. Hydrocollator Heating Units, Chattanooga, ISO13485 certified

Physical Agents in Rehabilitation, From Research to Practice 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2003) by Michelle Cameron