



Hot and Cold Gel Pack Application Procedure

Effective: 9 April 2021

1. Guiding Principles

The application of local heat/cold to muscles can assist in relaxation, comfort and provide some relief for aches and pains. The purpose of this procedure is to draw attention to the potential for injury to patients, when hot or cold packs are applied to the skin.

Cold therapy is recommended for the first 48 hours of a musculoskeletal injury.

Heat should be applied only **after** the first 48 hours of the initial injury in patients with musculoskeletal injuries.

2. Procedure

Alert

- Hot packs are not to be heated using a microwave oven as they are unable to provide a consistent, known temperature.
- Hot packs are to be heated in a warming device set at 60° C.
- Physiotherapy department specific hot packs are outside the scope of this procedure.
- Hot and cold packs must be used with a cover and are not to be applied directly to the skin.
- Particular care is to be taken with the following patients who are at higher risk of injury:
 - Infants
 - Patients who have impaired consciousness, sensation, circulation or mobility
 - Older patients
 - Patients who have language or communication difficulties.

Application of hot and cold packs

- Wash skin to remove liniment (if applicable).
- Test the temperature of the hot/cold pack, it should feel comfortable on the inner wrist.
- Assess patient's skin for impaired circulation or sensation.
- Ensure that the patient can access the nurse call bell, instruct patient to remove the pack if it feels too hot/cold or causes discomfort and to call for assistance.
- Check the site where the pack is applied 3-5 minutes after initial application and continue regular checks thereafter.
- Therapy is generally recommended for a period of 20 minutes per treatment.

- Following use, clean with a pre-impregnated disposable neutral detergent wipe or if cleaning and disinfection is required e.g. for patient under transmission precautions, use a pre-impregnated disposable detergent and disinfectant wipe (refer to the WACHS Environmental Cleaning Policy).
- Return to the warming device or freezer.
- Document outcome of therapy and site checks in patient’s healthcare record.
- Complete a Datix Clinical Incident Management System ([Datix CIMS](#)) form if the patient’s skin integrity is impaired and/or area remains red for greater than 20 minutes following the removal of the hot/cold pack.
- Inform patient/carer and document observations and patient/carer discussion in the healthcare record.

3. Definitions

Heat / Cold Packs	Disposable gel-filled packs
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4. Roles and Responsibilities

All registered and enrolled nurses are required to practice in accordance with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia codes and guidelines.

The National Decision-Making Framework facilitates nurse’s clinical decision-making. It is the responsibility of each health care provider to ensure all patient care and therapeutic interventions they provide are within their individual scope of practice.

All Staff are required to work within policies and guidelines to make sure that WACHS is a safe, equitable and positive place to be.

5. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the WA Health Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) (WA) and is binding on all WACHS staff which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency staff) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

6. Records Management

All WACHS clinical records must be managed in accordance with [Health Record Management Policy](#).

7. Evaluation

Monitoring of compliance with this document is to be carried out annually by the evaluation of CIMS report and patient feedback systems.

8. Standards

[National Safety and Quality Health Care Standards](#)
Clinical Governance Standard: 1.7.1

9. Legislation

Nil

10. References

1. [Heat and Cold Packs \(CC046\) Swan Kalamunda Health Service](#)
2. [Hot and Cold Gel Packs Rockingham Peel Group CMP Code AC136](#)
3. [Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare \(2019\)](#) (if link does not open in Internet Explorer, copy link and open in Chrome)

11. Related forms

Nil

12. Related Policy Documents

WACHS [Environmental Cleaning Policy](#)

13. Related WA Health System Policies

Nil

14. Policy Framework

[Clinical Governance, Safety and Quality Policy Framework](#)

15. Appendix

Appendix 1: [Hot Pack Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\)](#)

**This document can be made available in alternative formats
on request for a person with a disability**

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Appendix 1: Hot Pack Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Hot Pack SOP

