

HOT PACKS APPLICATION GUIDELINE

1. OPTIMAL OUTCOMES

- Provision of non-invasive pain relief

2. PATIENT

- Women requesting a hot pack for pain relief

3. STAFF

- Student midwives
- Medical students
- Registered midwives
- Registered nurses
- Medical officers
- Physiotherapist

4. EQUIPMENT

- Hydrocollator
- Hot pack
- Towels
- Plastic bag

5. CLINICAL PRACTICE

- Advise the woman:
 - To expect mild comfortable warmth only
 - There is a danger of being burnt if heat is more than mild
- Cover with plastic bag where there is a risk of contamination from body fluids
- Wrap hot pack in one or two towels
- Apply pack to affected area, ensuring woman is comfortable
- Advise the woman they can remove the pack at any time
- Leave the pack insitu for a maximum of twenty minutes
- Remove the pack and check for excessive erythema
- Check for relief of symptoms
- Do not apply if the woman has:
 - an effective epidural
 - a baby in bed with her
 - lack of thermal sensitivity
 - disturbance of blood flow to the area
 - infections in the area
 - had therapeutic x-ray treatment to the area within 6 months
 - acute arterial or venous pathology
 - a large wound
 - acute dermatological conditions
 - areas of swelling
- Use with caution for women who cannot understand instructions/warnings

ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN

Approved by

Clinical Performance & Quality Committee

CLINICAL POLICIES, PROCEDURES & GUIDELINES

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HOT PACKS APPLICATION GUIDELINE cont'd**6. HAZARDS/SUB-OPTIMAL OUTCOMES**

- Risk of burns to the skin from hot pack application

7. DOCUMENTATION

- Integrated notes

8. EDUCATIONAL NOTES

- The stimulation of sensory heat receptors may activate the pain gate mechanism
- Vascular changes could also reduce local pain
- Heat reduces muscle spasm, has a sedative effect as well as a decrease in sympathetic nervous system activity
- Hot packs may induce vascular changes

9. RELATED POLICIES/ PROCEDURES

- First stage labour care
- Second stage labour care

10. REFERENCES

- Law, J and Reed A (1995) *Electrotherapy explained principles and practice* 2nd edition Butterworth –Heinemann: Oxford
- Department of Health Guideline GL2005-15 Hot or Cold Packs Application