

# FOMENTATIONS

## Definition:

The *Fomentation Treatment* is an application of moist heat by means of a fomentation pad (fomie) or a Thermophore to a body part.

Fomentation Pad: For best results, the pad should be 50% wool for heat retention and 50% cotton for moisture retention. A thick cotton towel or a Thermophore®, (moist heating pad), can also be effectively used when a fomentation pad is not available.

## When to Use:

Local congestion or infection  
Sleeplessness or nervousness  
Muscle tension or spasm  
Joint or nerve pain  
To warm tissue for massage or cold treatment  
Increase circulation and promote healing

## Equipment:

2-4 Fomentation pads or Thermophore  
4 to 6 Bath Towels  
2 Friction mittens or hand towel  
Wash cloth  
Plastic shopping bag if using microwave  
Basin of ice water and foot bath container (Optional)  
Sheet and/or blanket  
Microwave oven (See below for alternate heating methods.)

## Steps to Follow:

- 1) Heat fomies; (see "Fomentation Heating Methods")
- 2) Place hot fomie in bed
- 3) Put hot foot bath in place on towel
- 4) Cover patient for warmth and modesty
- 5) Wrap heated fomie in cover (dry towel)
- 6) Apply fomentation to body part (chest)
- 7) Apply a cold compress to the forehead;
- 8) Leave fomie on 3 to 5 minutes, (to avoid burns - run hand under the fomentation over skin and/or add more towels)
- 9) Give a Cold Mitten Friction, (CMF), between changes and dry
- 10) Make 3 to 5 changes; check foot bath temp
- 11) Treatment can be finished with a full body CMF
- 12) Dry patient thoroughly
- 13) Assure patient warmth after treatment
- 14) Allow 45 minutes to 1 hour for rest

## **Fomentation Alternative Heating Methods**

### **Microwave Method:**

- 1) Soak fomie in warm water and ring out excess water. (If treating just the chest or just the back, 2 fomies will be adequate. If both the chest and back are being treated simultaneously, 3 fomies will be needed)
  - 2) Loosely roll fomies and place each one in a plastic shopping or garbage bag
  - 3) Place fomie in microwave for 3-4 minutes on high
- For reheating fomies for subsequent changes, 2-3 minutes is usually adequate to reach desired temperature

### **Oven Method:**

- 1) Prepare 3-4 fomies as above;
- 2) Wrap each one in aluminum foil instead of plastic bag
- 3) Heat in oven on a cookie sheet at 300° F for 30-40 minutes

### **Canning Kettle Method:**

- 1) Prepare 3-4 fomies as above; do not wrap;
- 2) Pour warm water into canning kettle so water is below top of steam rack
- 3) Roll fomies loosely and put on top of the steam rack
- 4) Steam fomies for 20-30 minutes

### **Boiling Water Method:**

- 1) Boil water in large kettle
- 2) Fold large towel in half lengthwise
- 3) Holding towel by the ends, immerse center portion in hot water
- 4) Remove excess water by twisting from the dry ends
- 5) Wring until drip-free
- 6) Wrap the moist towel in a dry towel

## **Cautions & Considerations**

Never use this treatment on an unconscious patient

Never use this treatment for internal or external bleeding

An acute injury should not be treated with hot

Fomentations may also include a hot foot bath simultaneously

Treat impaired circulation & impaired nerve sensation mildly

To prevent burning patient:

- Always use consistent communication
- Remember moisture intensifies heating of skin
- Remember bony places burn easily

To prevent burning yourself

- Remember heated fomies are very hot; handle with care

3 to 5 minutes of hot stimulates; 6 to 10 minutes sedates