Medical gels are used routinely in clinical practice during physician exams and diagnostic procedures. Contamination of medical gels from improper handling can result in serious healthcare-associated infections such as bacteremia and septicaemia [1-13].

POSITION STATEMENT
To provide for safe handling of medical gels, the following is recommended.

1. Indications for particular gels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indication</th>
<th>Type of Gel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whenever a biopsy, puncture of any kind, or imminent surgery is to be performed regardless of body site</td>
<td>Sterile ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-sterile ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near a fresh surgical wound</td>
<td>Sterile ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure penetrating mucous membrane</td>
<td>Sterile ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endoscopies on intact mucous membranes</td>
<td>Sterile ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-endoscopic procedure on mucous membranes (e.g., vaginal/rectal exam)</td>
<td>Sterile ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-intact skin</td>
<td>Sterile ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact skin</td>
<td>Sterile ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babies in NICUs and critical pediatric patients [11]</td>
<td>Sterile ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. General considerations
   a) Sterile gels
      • Single-use packaging is required for sterile gels: once opened, the contents are no longer sterile.
      • Sterile product should be used employing the principles of asepsis.
      • Discard the opened package at end of procedure.

   b) Non-sterile gels
      • If multi-dose containers of non-sterile gels are used on intact skin, the container should be sealed correctly when not in use [11].
      • Dispensing nozzles must not come into direct contact with patients, staff, instrumentation, or the environment [5].
      • Non-sterile gel containers should never be topped up (i.e., refilled when partially empty).
      • Gel containers should never be washed and refilled for use but should be discarded when empty [11].
      • When a new bottle is opened, the bottle should be initialed by the opener, dated, and discarded after 30 days or the manufacturer’s expiry date if earlier [5].
      • Bulk containers of gel should not be used due to risk of contamination.

   c) Warming of gel
      • Do not warm gel due to the increased risk of bacterial growth [12].
      • Gels are generally stored at room temperature unless the manufacturer’s recommendations state otherwise.
d) Storage of gels
- Products must be stored in clean areas that are protected from sources of contamination such as moisture, dust, insects, etc.
- Discard the medical gel if in doubt about integrity.

GLOSSARY/DEFINITIONS
As per the Canadian Standard Association:
“SHALL” is used to express a requirement, i.e., a provision that the user is obliged to satisfy in order to comply with the standard;
“SHOULD” is used to express a recommendation or that which is advised but not required; and
“MAY” is used to express an option or that which is permissible within the limits of the standard, an advisory or optional statement.

REFERENCES

¹ Medical gels include ultrasound gels, lubricating gels, and medicated gels.