Medical Gels

Background
Medical gels are used routinely in clinical practice during physician exams and diagnostic procedures. Contamination of gels* from improper handling can result in serious health care associated infections such as bacteremia and septicaemia.\(^{1,2,5,7,8,9,10,11,12}\)

*Medical Gels include ultrasound gels, lubricating gels, and other medicated gels.

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>Single dose</th>
<th>Bacteriostatic</th>
<th>Non-sterile</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>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>Near a fresh surgical wound</td>
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<td>Procedure penetrating mucous membrane</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endoscopies on intact mucous membranes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-endoscopic procedure on mucous membranes (e.g., vaginal/rectal exam)</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-intact skin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intact skin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>Babies in NICUs and critical pediatric patients (11)</td>
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</table>

2. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS
a) Sterile gel:

- Single use packaging is required for sterile gel as an opened sterile gel package is no longer sterile
- Sterile product must be used employing the principles of asepsis
b) Nonsterile gels.

- Non-sterile gel containers must never be topped up (i.e., refilled when partially empty).
- If multidose containers of nonsterile gel are used on intact skin, the container must be sealed correctly when not in use \(^{11}\).
- Containers of gel should never be washed and refilled for use but should be discarded when empty \(^{12}\).
- When a new bottle is opened, the bottle should be dated and discarded after 1 month or expiry date if earlier \(^{5}\).
- Bulk containers of gel are not recommended due to risk of contamination, therefore their use should be discouraged.

c) Warming of Gel

- Do not warm gel due to the increased risk of bacterial multiplication \(^{13}\).

d) Storage of Gels

- Products must be stored in clean areas where they are protected from sources of contamination such as moisture, dust, insects, etc.
- Discard the medical gel if in doubt about integrity.

This position statement was developed by Standards and Guidelines:

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References


10. CDC: Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) Safety Communication: Bacteria Found in Other-Sonic Generic Ultrasound Transmission Gel Poses Risk of Infection. CDC April 20,2012

