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 sepsis.\(^{(1,2,5,7,8,9,10,11,12)}\)

*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>Type of Gel</th>
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</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>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>✓ Bacteriostatic ✓ Sterile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-endoscopic procedure on mucous membranes (e.g., vaginal/rectal exam)</td>
<td>✓ Sterile ✓ Non-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 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
- Discard the opened package at end of procedure

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\(^{(11)}\)
- 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
susceptible Staphylococcus aureus. Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology, 21(12), 761-764.


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

