

Operational Directive	WRHA Infection Prevention & Control Program	
	Gels: Ultrasound and Medical	Page 1 of 4
	Approval Signature: N/A	Supersedes: Gels, Ultrasound and Medical Policy #90.00.70 September 2013
	Date of Approval: December 2007	
Review Date: July 2023		

1.0 PURPOSE:

1.1 To prevent the contamination of Multi-use Medical Gels and transmission of infections related to use of Medical and Ultrasound Gels within WRHA facilities and WRHA funded facilities.

2.0 PREAMBLE:

2.1 Medical Gels are used routinely in clinical practice. Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs), e.g., bacteremia and septicemia, have been associated with contamination of these products in healthcare settings. The following recommendations are to ensure the safe use of these products.

3.0 DEFINITIONS:

- 3.1 Asepsis: The absence of pathogenic (disease-producing) microorganisms. [\[5.3\]](#)
- 3.2 Aseptic Technique: The purposeful prevention of transfer of microorganisms from the patient's body surface to a normally sterile body site or from one person to another by keeping the microbe count to an irreducible minimum. Also referred to as sterile technique. [\[5.3\]](#)
- 3.3 Bacteriostatic: Inhibits the growth or multiplication of bacteria. [\[5.4\]](#)
- 3.4 Disinfectant: A product used on inanimate objects to reduce the quantity of microorganisms to an acceptable level. Hospital-grade disinfectants require a drug identification number (DIN) for sale in Canada. [\[5.3\]](#)
- 3.5 Healthcare Associated Infection (HAI): Infections that are transmitted within a health care setting (also referred to as nosocomial) during the provision of health care.
- 3.6 Medical Gels: A jellylike substance containing a medicine or other preparation. (e.g., ultrasound gels composed of a polymer for viscosity, substances to stabilize the pH, deionized water, a moisture retaining agent such as a glycol derivative, and preservative agents). Medical gels, even bacteriostatic formulations, provide a medium for bacteria to survive and multiply. [\[5.4\]](#)

- 3.7 **Multi-Use:** Equipment/supplies used more than once on multiple patients/residents/clients (P/C/R). [\[5.3\]](#)
- 3.8 **Non-Sterile Gels:** Ultrasound and Medical Gels which are clean but not sterile.
- 3.9 **Routine Practices:** A comprehensive set of Infection Prevention and Control (IP&C) measures that have been developed for use in the routine care of all patients at all times in all health care settings. Routine Practices aim to minimize or prevent HAIs in all individuals in the healthcare setting including patients, Healthcare Workers (HCW), other staff, visitors, contractors, etc. [\[5.3\]](#)
- 3.10 **Single Use:** A device designated by the manufacturer for one use only. [\[5.3\]](#)
- 3.11 **Single P/C/R Use:** Equipment/supplies dedicated for use on one P/R/C at a time. When the equipment or supplies are no longer required, it is reprocessed (i.e.: cleaned and disinfected) or discarded. [\[5.3\]](#)
- 3.12 **Sterile Gels:** Ultrasound and Medical Gels free from viable microorganisms, unopened packages which are labelled sterile by the manufacturer. [\[5.4\]](#)

4.0 OPERATIONAL DIRECTIVES:

- 4.1 Single Use Sterile Gel packages are used when performing procedures that require Aseptic Technique. Once a Sterile Gel has been opened it can no longer be considered sterile. Package must be discarded at the end of the procedure.
- 4.2 Single Use Sterile Gels are used for:
 - 4.2.1 Invasive procedures that pass a device through a tissue, e.g., needle localization, and tissue biopsy.
 - 4.2.2 Procedures involving a sterile environment or non-intact skin.
 - 4.2.3 Procedures penetrating mucous membranes.
 - 4.2.4 Babies in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.
 - 4.2.5 Endoscopies on intact mucous membranes.
 - 4.2.6. Non-endoscopic procedures on mucous membranes, e.g., vaginal or rectal exam.
- 4.3 Multi-Use Non-Sterile Gels are used for:
 - 4.3.1 Procedures on intact skin. For procedures performed infrequently (greater than one month apart), use a Single Use gel.
 - 4.3.2 Date Multi-Use Gel containers upon opening. Discard at 30 days, or earlier, if manufacturer expiry date is reached.
 - 4.3.3 Do not refill or top up Multi-Use Gel containers. Never wash and refill used containers. Discard containers when empty.
 - 4.3.4 Dispense Gel into a medicine cup or on a clean cloth, and then on to the skin, to reduce contaminating the nozzle. Discard remainder of contents upon completion of a procedure if the tip of container or dispensing nozzle comes in direct contact with a person, instrumentation, or the environment.

- 4.3.5 Ensure the dispensing nozzle is sealed correctly after each use. Wipe the dispensing nozzle and outside of the container with [Facility Approved Disinfectant](#) after each procedure.
- 4.3.6 Use a Single Use Gel for a person who is on [Additional Precautions](#), or leave the Multi-Use Gel container in the room if repeat procedures requiring Non-Sterile gel are necessary. Discard the gel when precautions are discontinued.

4.4 Gel Storage

- 4.4.1 Store in dry areas that are protected from potential sources of contamination, e.g., dust, moisture, insects, rodents.
- 4.4.2 Discard gel if evidence of contamination is present or the package integrity has been breached.
- 4.4.3 Rotate product when restocking.

4.5 Warmed Gels

- 4.5.1 Do not warm medical gel due to the increased risk of bacterial multiplication. [\[5.2\]](#)

4.6

Type of Gel		
Indication	Single dose Sterile	Non-sterile
Biopsy, puncture of any kind, or imminent surgery is to be performed regardless of body site	√	
Near a fresh surgical wound	√	
Procedure penetrating mucous membrane	√	
Babies in NICUs	√	
Non-endoscopic procedure on mucous membranes (e.g., vaginal/rectal exam)	√	
Endoscopies on intact mucous membranes	√	
Intact skin		√
Person on additional precautions	√	If repeat procedures requiring Non-Sterile gel are necessary, leave the Multi-Use container in the room for single person only. Discard when precautions are discontinued and/or when expired.

5.0 REFERENCES:

- 5.1 [Medical Gels Information Sheet. Infection Prevention and Control \(IPC\) Guidance.](#) (September 18, 2018). Alberta Health Services. Accessed January 25, 2023
- 5.2 [Medical Gels: Position Statement.](#) (May 2021). Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Canada. Accessed January 25, 2023.
- 5.3 [Routine Practices and Additional Precautions: Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care.](#) (2019). Manitoba Health. Accessed January 25, 2023
- 5.4 Systematic review of ultrasound gel associated *Burkholderia cepacia* complex outbreaks: Clinical presentation, sources and control of outbreak. (Feb.2022) Angrup, A et al.