

FOMENTATION.

This is the application of heat and moisture to some part of the body. In applying the fomentation, a flannel cloth should be folded so as to be of three or four thicknesses, and sufficiently large to cover the parts which it is desirable to treat. If the fomentation is to be applied to the chest, shoulders, or neck, the folded cloth should be about twelve inches square, or twelve by fifteen inches. If it is to be applied over the region of the liver, stomach, or bowels, it should be twelve by eighteen inches. After folding this cloth, it should be carefully rolled and dipped in very hot water, and should then be applied as hot as the patient can bear, after being wrung quite dry. It is a good plan to leave the ends of the roll dry, so that the cloth can be wrung out warmer; but if the ends of the cloth become wet in the hot water, the attendant can dip his hands in cold water several times while wringing it, and by so doing can apply it hotter than he otherwise could. The hot cloth should be covered with several thicknesses of dry, so as to keep all of the steam in and keep the clothes dry. The fomentation should be continued for fifteen to thirty minutes, the cloths being reapplied every five or ten minutes. The hot fomentation should always be followed immediately with the application of a cold wet cloth to the part, which should be

allowed to remain four or five minutes. In some cases, it will be best to alternate the hot cloth with the cold two or three times, always beginning with the hot and ending with the cold. As a general thing, hot fomentations should not be continued more than twenty-five minutes without alternating with the cold wet cloth, except in cases of severe pain, such as pleurisy, etc.

Fomentations are specially adapted to chronic congestions of the liver, spleen, stomach, and, in fact, to all inflammations attended with much pain and little heat, whether chronic or acute. It is also well suited to all visceral congestions, or rheumatic affections, unattended with fever, and to rigid, torpid, or contracted muscles, and local pains, aches, cramps, etc., when fever is not present. In pneumonia and pleurisy, it is thought by some of the best hygienic physicians that the hot fomentation should be applied to the back and shoulders with cool or cold applications in front, over the seat of the pain. Others apply the hot cloths immediately over the location of the pain, alternating, after twenty-five or thirty minutes, with cold. This method is found to be very successful. In case the patient is nervous, the prolonged warm fomentation is sometimes better than the hot, and may be continued two or three hours.

The following report of a case in my own practice will show how effectual fomentations are in relieving pain and reducing inflammation. I was traveling in Yolo Co., Cal., in the fall of 1872. In passing the residence of an acquaintance, I was induced to stop for the night. After remaining in the house for a short time, my attention was attracted by groans in an adjoining room; and in answer to inquiries I learned that they came from the hired man, who was very sick— so sick that he could not breathe without groaning with pain— and that he had employed a drug doctor, who had attended him for a week, but that he was growing worse very fast. On examination I found that the patient was taking five kinds of medicine, and that a fly blister as large as a man's hand had been raised; yet so severe was the pleurisy pain that the patient was not aware of the blister, and it had been nearly a day since it was applied. I applied hot fomentations for nearly an hour, alternating with cold once or twice in the meantime, at the end of which time the patient was so far eased from the pain as to sleep well, which he had been unable to do for several days and nights previous. In the morning he had no pain other than that caused by the blister. The doctor had given sweet spirits of niter, nitric acid, turpentine, and nine other drugs and mixtures during the six days he had treated him; and, as a result, the patient was nearly

drugged to death. I treated him hygienically for six days, at the end of which time he was out of danger.

The Hygienic Family Physician: A Complete Guide for the Preservation of Health, and the Treatment of the Sick without Medicine. Pg. 163-166 by M. G. Kellogg