

THE WET-SHEET PACK.

The wet-sheet pack is, when judiciously administered, one of the most successful modes of treatment that has ever been devised. It is especially adapted to bilious affections, and to all kinds of fevers. To administer the pack successfully, spread on the bed or lounge two or three or more blankets or comforters, the number required depending on their thickness and the temperature of the weather and of the patient; three will generally be sufficient in cold weather, and two, in warm. Next, spread a woolen sheet or blanket over them. Then wet a large cotton or linen sheet, and wring it so that it will not drip; or, if the patient is feeble, wring it still more, then spread the sheet over the blanket and let the patient lie down on it upon his back. Having done this, he should elevate his arms, and an attendant should fold the sheet over him from one side, letting it come close up under both arms, and drop between the limbs so as to completely envelop each limb by itself. Having done this, the patient should place his arms by his side or across his chest, when the attendant should fold the sheet over him from the other side, covering both arms, shoulders, and neck. Care should be taken to have the wet sheet touch all parts of the body and limbs, and to have it wrapped closely about the neck and feet; but it should not be drawn too tightly, for

if it is, the patient will become restless. As soon as the sheet is properly adjusted, each blanket should be folded separately across the patient, first from one side, then from the other, taking care to fold them about the neck in such a manner as to exclude all the air. The head should be elevated a little so that the patient can lie comfortable. Care must be taken to cover the feet carefully, so as to keep them warm; and if clothing fails to do this, a jug of hot water or a hot brick should be applied to them. The patient's head should be kept cool while in the pack by the frequent application of wet cloths. It is well to have a piece of oilcloth (*or plastic*) two feet square spread under the patient's head to prevent wetting the bedding. If the patient's feet become cold, his head will be apt to become hot, and ache; therefore keep the head cool and the feet warm.

The temperature of the water in which the sheet is wet should depend altogether upon the conditions of the patient. If he is vigorous, and has a strong circulation, he will react better from a cool pack than from a warm or tepid one; but if he is weak, or has a feeble circulation, the pack should be warm, or at least tepid. If the patient does not warm readily after entering the pack, more blankets should be placed over him, or hot bricks or bottles of hot water should be applied to his sides.

The length of time that a person should remain in a pack varies according to circumstances. Some people think that sweating should always be induced before leaving the pack; but this is not essential. It is quite important, however, that the patient should become thoroughly warm before leaving it, and if he is inclined to remain chilly, a glass of hot water or of hot lemonade should be given him to drink. As a general rule, from thirty to forty-five minutes will be a sufficient length of time for a patient to remain in a pack unless he rests so comfortably that he falls asleep, in which case, he need not be awakened for an hour unless he becomes liable to chill, or sweats too freely, or his sleep does not appear to be natural. If the patient gives evidence of exhaustion, or sweats profusely, take him out immediately, even if he has not been in the pack more than ten minutes. The wet-sheet pack is applicable in all diseases in which it is desirable to purify the blood, and in all spasmodic affections. It allays excitement, quiets the nerves, and allays all irritations; and when given at a temperature so as to meet the actual state of the patient, it is the most soothing application that can be administered to the external surface.

The pack is very useful in fevers. If the fever is high, the pack may be administered three or four times in the twenty-four hours, in which case the patient should not be

allowed to remain in it long at any one time. In past time it was thought that the cold pack was the best in fevers; but it is now found that the tepid pack is better in most cases, for the reason that the reaction after the cold pack is apt to increase the fever. In some cases it is better to apply very warm, and even hot, packs in fever than to give those of a lower temperature. If the patient continues to chill while in the pack, he should be taken out, and immediately given either a warm sitz-bath or full-bath; or if there is no hot water ready, he should take the dry-sheet rub and then cover up warm in bed. There is no danger, however, of a patient of medium strength chilling, provided the blankets are properly adjusted. The pack should always be followed by the dripping-sheet, spray, or sponge-bath, after which the dry sheet should be applied, the patient being wiped dry, and then well rubbed with the naked hand. Very feeble persons should not take this pack.

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