

Clinical
Information

Hotline

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Pad Warming...Patient Comfort or Patient RISK?

"Can the patient return electrode be placed in the warmer?" This is a question Clinical Information Associates hear quite often. Why? Because nurses are concerned with the well-being of their patients and providing for the patient's comfort is one of the many aspects considered in their care. This is especially true in the office and outpatient setting where the patient is awake and aware of external stimuli.

Prior to starting any surgical procedure that requires monopolar electrosurgery, the patient return electrode must be applied. The conductive material on the return electrode that interfaces with the patient can feel cold, wet, and unpleasant. Because of this, warming the return electrode would seem to be the logical answer. Such is not the case for the following reasons.

Valleylab does not recommend warming the Standard PolyHesive® or REM® PolyHesive® II Patient Return Electrode because they have been tested and warranted for a "shelf life" of two years when stored at **room temperature** as directed on the product carton.

PolyHesive is a hydrogel-based conductive adhesive containing at least 50% water. This patented material provides high moisture

content to enhance skin conductivity. Placing the return electrode in a warmer could alter the properties of the PolyHesive, thus drying out the pad. Drying can increase impedance at the patient to pad interface compromising the safety and effectiveness of the patient return electrode. If drying occurs with the REM® patient return electrode, the REM® Contact Quality Monitoring System alarms and power is interrupted. The patient return electrode will then have to be replaced prior to continuation of the surgical procedure, adding to patient cost and increased surgical time. The added measure of safety provided by the contact quality monitoring system is not available with a Standard PolyHesive patient return electrode and therefore dry spots could go undetected, possibly compromising patient safety.

Although the patient's comfort is important and helps to provide for a positive patient outcome, safety is the most important factor in patient care. Follow each manufacturer's written instructions for proper use of **any** patient return electrode.

Additional questions can be answered by a Clinical Information Associate at 800-255-VLAB(8522), Ext. 2005.

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