TOPICAL MEDICATIONS

POLICY

Administration of topical medications requires a physician’s order and is performed in accordance to procedure as described.

PURPOSE

To apply medication to the skin.

EQUIPMENT

1. Medication (cream, powder, patch, ointment, and spray) as ordered by the physician
2. Cotton-tip applicators or tongue blade
3. Sterile dressing and hypoallergenic tape
4. Soap and warm water, basin, washcloth, and towel
5. Nonsterile or sterile gloves

PROCEDURE

1. May be performed by RN or LPN. Aides may apply over the counter topical medications only as directed on Aide Assignment Sheet.

2. Explain the procedure to the patient/caregiver.

3. Position and drape the patient to apply topical medication.

4. Remove the old medication, and prepare the skin or tissue for new medication. Wash the skin with soap and water, soak the affected area, or debride the tissue and pat dry.

5. Apply topical medication in the following manner.

   A. Aerosol Spray – shake the container; spray the medication for as long as directed, and follow the manufacturer’s directions for recommended distance to hold spray away from the skin (usually 6 to 12 inches); instruct the patient to turn his or her face away from the spray to prevent inhalation of medication; spray the medication evenly over the skin or tissue.

   B. Cream, Lotion, or Ointment – put approximately 2 teaspoons of medication in the palm of your hand; rub it between your hands to soften and warm it; use even strokes, and spread the medication over the skin; follow the direction of hair growth to avoid causing
folliculitis; repeat the procedure, until the appropriate area of skin is completely covered; if a suspension-based lotion is being used, shake the container vigorously before applying a small amount of the lotion to a pad or gauze dressing; apply with even strokes to the skin; repeat the procedure until the appropriate area of the skin is completely covered.

C. Nitroglycerin Ointment – apply the prescribed inches over a paper measuring guide; evenly spread the ointment over the paper guide to promote maximal absorption; avoid applying the ointment on hairy surfaces or over scar tissue because this inhibits absorption; date, record time of day, and initial the paper; cover the paper with plastic wrap, and secure it with tape as needed.

D. Patch – remove the patch from its protective wrapper; hold the patch by the edge; do not touch the adhesive edges; immediately apply the patch, pressing it firmly with the palm of one hand for 10 to 15 seconds; as it is prescribed by the physician, remove the patch, and choose a different site to apply a new patch; date, record the time of day, and initial the patch.

E. Powder – ensure that the skin surface is completely dry to minimize caking and crusting; completely spread apart the skin folds; lightly dust with a shake dispenser until the area is covered with a fine, thin layer of powder; powders wear off easily.

6. Apply dressing as prescribed by the physician. Secure with hypoallergenic tape as needed.

7. Assist the patient to a comfortable position, and help to dress him or her as needed.

8. Clean and replace the equipment. Discard disposable items in a plastic trash bag.

9. Document the procedure and medication, site of application, patient toleration, any patient/caregiver instructions and patient compliance on patient visit report.