

Physiotherapy Department

Wax Therapy

What is wax therapy?

Paraffin wax bath therapy is an application of molten paraffin wax and mineral oil to parts of the body. The combination of paraffin and mineral oil has a low specific heat which enhances the patient's ability to tolerate heat better than from water of the same temperature.

It is one of the most effective ways of applying heat to improve mobility by heating connective tissues.

Wax therapy is mainly used on your hands in a hospital setting.

Wax therapy is used to alleviate:

- Pain and stiffness associated with Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Fibromyalgia
- Eczema (a dry skin disorder)
- Joint stiffness and muscle soreness from a variety of causes, such as following fractures, some minor surgical conditions, ligament sprains and strains

What are the benefits of wax therapy?

Paraffin wax acts as a form of heat therapy and can help improve circulation, relax muscles and reduce stiffness in the joints. It can also help soften skin and may help reduce swelling.

Are there side effects?

Paraffin wax is tested in a lab to make sure it's safe and hygienic to use on the body. It's completely natural and has a low melting point, which means



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it can be easily applied to the skin at a temperature low enough not to cause burns or blisters.

However, if you have very sensitive skin, paraffin wax may cause heat rash. Heat rash results in small red bumps on the skin that can be itchy and uncomfortable.

If you have a chemical sensitivity, you may develop minor swelling or breakouts from the wax treatment. That's because paraffin comes from petroleum products.

Wax therapy – is it safe?

Yes it is in general, but please note the following list and if you have any of these do not attempt to use wax for your own and other family members' safety

Contra indications (never use in the presence of)

- Open wound
- Skin infection/Rashes
- Defective skin sensation(Inability to judge correctly hot and cold temperature differences on the skin)
- Ischemic conditions(Very Poor blood supply to an area)
- Skin allergy
- Diabetes (where there is likelihood of reduced sensation and heating may affect your blood sugar levels)

Dangers

- Burns (Thermostatically controlled units which regulate the temperature of the wax should always be used to reduce the risk of this). If you're doing a paraffin wax treatment at home, take care not to heat the wax too much, as it may catch fire. It should be no more than 125°F (51.7°C) when you start your treatment.
- Aggravation of inflammation.

Your Physiotherapist will have asked you questions which will confirm to them whether you can be a safe candidate for Wax therapy, but if you are unsure and remain concerned about your suitability or risk to yourself please seek your GP's or practice nurse's advice before commencing the use of wax.

How is it applied?

A paraffin wax treatment involves submerging the affected body part, usually the hand/hands, into a large container of warm wax for a moment or two, creating a waxy glove.

- The hands should be dipped into the wax up to 10 times. Each time lifting out clear and allowed to set for 2-3 seconds (it should lose its shine) before re-immersion. This is done to build up an adequate layer of warm wax.
- The hand should then be covered with a plastic bag and a towel wrapped around it to insulate it.
- The wax can remain on the hand until the heat has gone which will probably be about 15-20 minutes.
- Take the towel, slide the plastic bag off and then peel the wax back towards the fingers it should slide off in almost one piece.
- This wax should then be discarded or if the unit is being used by only one person, it can be replaced in the bath to melt again. (Please only follow manufacturer's instructions for your own safety). The wax will however need replacing after several uses as it will gather some dead skin cells and will have a degree of body perspiration contained within it on removal from skin, thus making it unsafe to continue using.

Where can I purchase a wax bath for home use?

(**Note for your own safety**, you should only follow each individual manufacturer's instructions for the use of their specific pieces of equipment.)

- Baths can be purchased from beauty supply sections of large department stores for example John Lewis and also from On-line stores/comparison sites such as:

Amazon www.amazon.co.uk

HoMedics www.homedics.co.uk

Argos www.Argos.co.uk

EBay www.ebay.co.uk

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- They can vary in price and size but small units suitable for immersing one hand at a time can cost approximately £45 upwards (prices correct as of January 2020) As a therapist making an observation of the adverts, for those costing less than £45, my conclusion is that they may not have adequate thermostatic control or be robust enough for regular use.
- Wax refill blocks/pellets can cost £10-£15 from the same companies.
- Accessory items such as covering mitts to put on over the wax application to insulate/keep the warmth in for longer can be purchased from the same companies costing approximately £18.

For further information contact:

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