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POLICY:

- All safety precautions will be followed when treating a patient in the whirlpool.
- The whirlpool is only used when the wound is infected. Stop treatment as soon as the wound is clean.
- The whirlpool will be cleaned after each patient use to prevent contamination between patients.

INDICATIONS:

- Wound cleansing of infected decubiti and other skin lesions with heavy exudates, slough or necrotic tissue
- Increase circulation
- Proliferation of healthy tissue
- The treatment of infection with whirlpool additives

PRECAUTIONS:

- Cardiovascular response of patient-immersion in warm water increases blood pressure, thus patients with poor cardiac status or severe hypertension must be closely evaluated for whirlpool candidacy.
- Use a safety belt while transferring or lifting patient into whirlpool.
- Temperature of water-circulation and skin condition of the geriatric patient is not as good as the average younger patient and burns occur easily (less than 98 degrees F).
- Increased damaged to burned tissue by the elevated temperature of the whirlpool.
- There may be occlusion of venous and arterial vessels in a limb in a dependent position.

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- Patients with arterial insufficiency may be at risk due to an increase in demand for blood flow.
- Patients who are blind, confused or have psychological diagnoses must be kept under continuous supervision.

PROCEDURE:

- Treatment Procedures:
 - Pre-Treatment:
 - Ensure machine is grounded.
 - Clean and sterilize whirlpool per manufacturer’s instructions.
 - Fill to appropriate water level and temperature.
 - If whirlpool is not used immediately, cover with clean sheet.
 - Add appropriate agent, as ordered by the patient’s physician, just prior to immersing the patient.
 - Treatment:
 - Immerse the patient or appropriate extremity into tub.
 - Adjust desired force and direction of spray.
 - Turn on agitator for 10 to 20 minutes.
 - The patient must remain supervised while in whirlpool.
 - Post-Treatment:
 - Perform soft wound cleansing, if indicated.
 - If using a bather, empty tub prior to opening bather door.

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- Remove the patient from tub and dry quickly with a sterile towel.
 - Cover open wound with sterile wrap and return the patient to appropriate unit.
 - Notify the patient's nurse that the patient is out of whirlpool and requires dressing of wound, if indicated.
- Documentation:
 - Document the following information in the daily progress notes:
 - Whirlpool treatment administered to the patient
 - Extremity immersed
 - Type of whirlpool tank used
 - Duration of treatment
 - Additive
 - Whether sterile procedures were used
 - Wound measurements (if change is noted), color, drainage odor
 - Patient tolerance to treatment
 - The weekly summary will summarize the daily progress notes, making a direct comparison to the prior week's status. This will also include present and former wound measurements which will objectively show progress of wound healing.
 - Documentation of wound size (at least weekly) will be included in the medical record.

REFERENCE:

Irion, G., PhD, PT, CWS, *Comprehensive Wound Management*, Slack Incorporated, Second Edition, 2010