Electrosurgical Procedure Safety Checklist

✚ Familiarise yourself with the electrosurgical unit being used.

✚ Familiarise yourself with the settings used for each procedure.

✚ Safe grounding pads must have at least 69 cm² / 10 sq. inches of conductive area. Use an adult size pad where possible; otherwise, a paediatric size. Never cut or fold a pad to fit a site.

✚ The ideal application site must consider the procedure, patient position and current flow away from ECG electrodes. Avoid placement near scars or implants sites, and consult a cardiologist when a patient is wearing a pacemaker.

✚ The application site must be clean, dry and shaved; excess hair is the most common cause of electrosurgical burns.

✚ Avoid pressure sores by ensuring the patient is not resting on the clamp.

✚ Check the cord on corded patient plates, or the reusable cable for damage before each use. Then check the cable-electrode connection.

✚ Be aware of power loss conditions should the surgeon ask for much higher than normal current settings.

✚ Recheck the plate contact and cable connection after moving the patient.

✚ Make sure the patient is not in contact with any metal component.

✚ Make sure cables are not coiled up or wrapped around metal objects; avoid the “spark test” to check the active electrode (it can cause damage to the generator).

✚ Place the active electrode in a holder when not in use.

Safety Check
For your information
Do’s and Don’ts
Positive steps towards diathermy safety

DO’s

✔ **DO** shave, clean and thoroughly dry the patient plate site before applying the patient plate.

✔ **DO** position the patient plate as close to the operative site as is safe and reasonably possible.

✔ **DO** check all cables to active electrodes and patient plate for cracks and deterioration.

✔ **DO** follow manufacturer’s instructions for checking alarm systems.

✔ **DO** locate the patient plate over well vascularised muscular areas.

✔ **DO** apply the patient plate before draping the patient.

✔ **DO** ensure that the patient plate is in direct and complete contact with the patient to permit the flow of current.

✔ **DO** check the patient plate for adequate contact if the patient is moved during surgery.

✔ **DO** make sure the cable-to-machine and cable-to-plate connections are secure.

✔ **DO** check the patient plate and all connections during surgery if constant level increases are required.

✔ **DO** keep the active electrode blade clear of tissue build-up.

✔ **DO** position ECG electrodes the maximum possible distance from the surgical site.

✔ **DO** take time to prepare the diathermy unit and to apply patient plates carefully.

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Do’s and Don’ts
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DON’Ts in placing patient plates

✖ DON’T allow fluids to pool at the patient site.
✖ DON’T locate the patient plate over bony or hairy areas, scar tissue or implanted prosthesis.
✖ DON’T cut or fold the patient plate or make it smaller for any reason. Remember minimum safety size is 69 cm² / 10 sq. inches.
✖ DON’T use bent, scored or crumpled plates.
✖ DON’T use patient plates which have surface blemishes, or are in any way suspect in regard to their conductivity and/or patient contact.
✖ DON’T place the active electrode on grounded surfaces when in use.
✖ DON’T activate the active electrode until it is close to the surgical site.
✖ DON’T wrap the patient plate or active electrode cables around metal objects.
✖ DON’T spark the active electrode to ground to check the generator.