

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.



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

Positive steps towards diathermy safety

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.

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