

Mustard Plaster

Often used for whooping cough, dry heaves, or vomiting, this is a strong counter-irritant, which brings blood to the area being treated.

The "plaster" is a paste made of mustard and applied to an area to warm it, causing the attraction of blood into the treated capillaries. The Naturopathic use of the traditional plaster is once again accompanied with a water- hydrotherapy application. Heat pulls blood to the area and the cold application that follows, pushes the blood away. The push and pull action is more therapeutic than simply hot or cold applications alone. Heat by itself stagnates the blood in the area after 10 minutes duration. Cold by itself constricts vessels and delays blood flow if constant application lasts greater than 15 minutes. (A "heating compress" is different. It is a cold application which is allowed and encouraged to warm up with the body's own heat.)

For the mustard plaster you will need: powdered mustard (you can purchase this at any grocery store. It is commonly found in the spice aisle); one egg white (or substitute 1 TBS corn starch with enough water to make a paste. This is important if you are egg intolerant or allergic to eggs); a 4 in. x 4 in. gauze pad, cheesecloth, or thin kitchen linen towel; a washcloth; and a piece of 6 in. x 6 in. wool or wool scarf.

Mix one egg white with enough powdered mustard to make a thick paste. Put this in the center of a 4 in. x 4 in. cloth or gauze pad and sandwich this between another piece of cloth or gauze of the same size. You can pre-make several of these plasters and store them in the refrigerator. Use the pack fresh, or if stored and refrigerated you can 'activate' the plaster with hot water, squeezing out the excess before applying the pack to the skin.

The following therapy is used in treating whooping cough. This will stop the "whoop" so that the child can catch air and breath more normally. This procedure may also treat dry heaves, which may be caused from food poisoning, a food - reaction vomiting, or from alcohol consumption.

Apply the mustard plaster to the upper epigastric region of the abdomen. In an adult the pack may completely fit between the belly button and the under-side of the rib cage. In a child or infant, the pack may cover the belly button or the entire abdomen, but place it below the rib cage and not on the ribs themselves. Cover the pack with wool flannel or a piece of wool blanket / sweater / or old wool sock.

Begin timing the pack as soon as you put it on. In 10 to 15 minutes it will become too hot. Note the exact time. (For example: the pack was too hot at exactly 12 minutes into the application). Immediately remove the plaster and place a cold washcloth (wrung well out of cold water), covered with wool, in the exact same place for the exact same amount of time; i.e. 12 minutes.

Now, repeat the process. Apply the plaster covered with wool and time it. Each time you apply the plaster the time will decrease as it works faster and feels hotter quicker. This second application it may be only 8 minutes until it feels too warm and is then switched to the cold cloth covered with wool for the exact same amount of time - 8 minutes.

The next series may only be applied for 4 minutes, then 2 minutes, and then only 30 seconds, or 10 seconds. At this point you quit the application series. The derivative therapy of the mustard plaster will draw blood into the hepatic flexure, warm the stomach, relax the diaphragm, and stop the whoop of the cough or the vomiting spasms.

Mustard plasters can be done as often as needed. Caution not to burn the skin by seeing if you can tolerate the heat longer. It is **NOT** beneficial to go longer than comfortable with the heat of the mustard pack. Be advised the mustard pack can and will burn the skin if not alternated appropriately with cold. You can create blistered skin burns, which would not be advised.

Infants and children who cannot tell you when the heat of the pack is uncomfortable cueing you into switching to the cold application, must be monitored closely by looking at the skin reaction. Only apply the mustard plaster as long as needed to bring pinkness to the skin, then alternate with the cold application for the equivalent time and proceed as described above.

The mustard plaster is the primary therapy used in a home setting to control the symptoms of whooping cough. It may also be useful a pneumonia or bronchitis if coughing spasms result. This is an amazing treatment for dry heaves. It will immediately stop the retching.