

## SAFETY CAUTION

February 2024

### Skin burns reported during vascular surgery from pooling of cleaning fluids on under warming blankets

Under warming mattresses have been identified as cause of patient burns.

In the National Reporting and Learning System (NRLS) vascular surgery was responsible for just under half of the reported skin burns incidents, with skin prep pooling, a long procedure time, and the use of Chlorhexidine solution for skin prep identified as contributing factors.

The IFU's from two leading warming mattress manufacturers identify that warming can exacerbate skin irritation from pooled surgical prep solutions.

One manufacturer (HotDog™, International Medical Products) adds '*Do not warm ischemic or non-perfused tissue; thermal injury may result. Examples include tissue distal to aortic cross clamping, or when vasoconstrictive drugs would lead to severe, prolonged vasoconstriction.*'

The NHS England patient safety team has asked the Vascular Society to alert members and theatre teams to ensure that no pooling of fluid occurs under patients when prepping and an under warming blanket is used. The volume of fluid used to prepare the skin should be kept to a minimum. This is especially important for a 'prewash' of the groins.

Provided this guidance is followed the use of these devices within their Instructions for Use (IFU) is considered safe, with no skin burns reported in the absence of fluid pooling.

Marcus Brooks  
Honorary Secretary, Vascular Society

On behalf of NHS England Surgical Safety Lead