CLINICAL SNAPSHOT

Second-Degree Burns after the Application of a Mustard-and-Honey Body Wrap

A 28-year-old woman presented complaining of very painful, partly ruptured cutaneous vesicles on the lower abdomen, back, and buttocks. Dermatological examination revealed degree 2a burns with involvement of the stratum papillare. She had applied a body wrap for the treatment of unwanted body fat and "cellulite," composed as follows, according to a recipe she found on the Internet: mix mustard powder and honey in a 1:1 ratio in warm tap water and apply to the skin for 15 minutes, covered by an ordinary household plastic film. Certain components of mustard, including allyl isothiocyanate, are strong skin irritants and vasodilators and are used as rubefacients or as tear gas. Their application to the skin produces a sensation of warmth but can also cause

vascular occlusion and burns that may be severe, or even circulatory failure, mainly in patients with light and sensitive skin. Patients must therefore be warned that information from the Internet should always be regarded critically. In particular, tips about treatments to be applied to the body should not be put to use indiscriminately. This patient was treated with analgesics, topical steroids, and non-adhesive wound dressings and experienced marked improvement within a few days.

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Conflict of interest statement: The authors state that they have no conflict of interest.

Translated from the original German by Ethan Taub, M.D.

Cite this as: Gaiser MR, Köhl H: Second-degree burns after the application of a mustard-and-honey body wrap. *Dtsch Arztebl Int* 2017; 114: 496.
DOI: 10.3238/arztebl.2017.0496

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