

# Many heat patches cool down quickly

Gesundheitstipp test: A single plaster scored very well

The good news is that almost all heat patches contain no harmful substances. But many patches are only moderately warming and do not adhere well to the skin. This is what the test of ten products shows.

Tense muscles are often responsible for pain in the back, neck or shoulders. Such complaints can be treated with heat patches. Walter O. Frey, a specialist in rheumatology at the Hirslanden Clinic in Zurich: "Heat can help to loosen the muscles. It promotes

blood circulation in the muscles and relieves tension.

However, the Gesundheitstipp test shows that not all heat patches work well and for long. Laboratory experts tested ten products to see how long they kept the skin warm and how well they adhered to the

skin. In addition, the laboratory tested the patches for harmful substances (see "How Gesundheitstipp tested", page 18). Only patches containing a mixture of activated charcoal and iron were tested. When this mixture combines with oxygen, the patches generate heat.

## Test winner smells slightly of herbs

The only heat patch that scored "very good" was the model from Herbachaud. The highest tempera-

ture measured with this product was 37.3 degrees, and the average value was 36.9 degrees. And: The heat lasted for a total of 24 hours. The only irritating thing about the Herbachaud plaster was the slight herbal smell, which is not to everyone's liking. The heat pad from Thermacare also showed good heat performance.

## Four out of ten heat patches only enough (Gesundheitstipp February 2022)



	Herbachaud	Thermacare	Nexcare	Sanactiv	Voltaren
Designation	Heat patch	Heat pads	Heat patch	Heat patch	Heat patch
Purchased from	Galaxus.ch	Coop Vitality	Coop	Migros	Zurrose-shop.ch
Price paid in francs	29.90	10.30	18.70	4.90	15.40
Number of patches per package	6	2	5	2	2
Price per patch in francs	4.98	5.15	3.74	2.45	7.70
Also available from	Amavita, Brack.ch, Coop Vitality, Zurrose-Shop.ch	Amavita, Benu, Brack.ch, Toppharm, Zurrose-Shop.ch	Amavita, Zurrose-Shop.ch	–	Amavita, Benu, Coop Vitality
Heat output	70% <sup>1</sup> 5,5	5	4,7	4,7	4,8
Field test	30% <sup>1</sup> 5,5	5,4	5,2	5	4,7
Intermediate grade	100% 5,5	5,1	4,9	4,8	4,8
Deduction pollutants <sup>2</sup>	No	No	No	No	No
Total score	5,5	5,1	4,9	4,8	4,8
Overall rating	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>

<sup>1</sup> Weighting of the criteria

<sup>2</sup> Deduction of 0.5 marks if the sum of all nitrosatable substances is higher than 0.01 mg/kg

Grade scale: 5.5 to 6 = Very good 4.8 to 5.4 = Good 4.0 to 4.7 =



Heat plaster: Should help against tense muscles



	Livsane	Wundmed	SOS	Fit + Vital	Active Med
	Heat patch	Natural heat patch	Heat patch	Natural heat patch	Heat patch
	Benu	Obi	Brack.ch	Drogeriemarkt Müller	Aldi
	9.95	2.90	6.40	6.95	7.99
	2	1	2	2	3
	4.98	2.90	3.20	3.48	2.66
Brack.ch	–	Jumbo	Zurrose-shop.ch	–	–
	4,7	4,7	4,6	4,6	5
	4,9	4,8	5	4,7	4,7
	4,8	4,7	4,7	4,6	4,9
	No	No	No	No	Yes
	4,8	4,7	4,7	4,6	4,4
	<b>Good</b>	<b>Sufficient</b>	<b>Sufficient</b>	<b>Sufficient</b>	<b>Sufficient</b>

Sufficient 2,5 to 3,9 = Insufficient under 2,5 = Bad In case of equal overall score, ranking according to price.

With all other products, the warming effect was somewhat lukewarm, as the laboratory experts found: The average temperature of the plasters was 36.5 degrees - that is only 1 degree above the value of 35.5 degrees that the experts measured on the skin surface of test subjects.

The product "Natural Heat Patch" by Wundmed reached the peak value of 37.8 degrees - but the temperature already dropped to the skin temperature after four and a half hours or was even lower. In addition, the plaster did not stick well to the skin. The experts' verdict: "It adheres less well to the corners." For this reason, the plaster from Wundmed also only received a satisfactory grade.

### Traces of sensitive substances in Aldi product

Heat patches often stick to the skin for a long time - manufacturers advise five to ten hours. For this reason, it is important that the patches do not release any sensitive substances. Gesundheitstipp, therefore, had tests carried out to find out whether the patches contained substances that could cause allergies or even cancer, or act like hormones. The good news: the laboratory found no substances that irritate the skin in any of the patches. However, the laboratory did find slightly elevated residues of substances that can form nitrosamines when they come into contact with nitrogen oxides in the Aldi brand Active Med patches. These can cause cancer. The patch received a half-mark deduction, although Aldi complied with the limit values. The reason: health products in particular should not contain any harmful substances.

In its statement, Wundmed was surprised that its plaster cooled down after only four and a half hours. According to the company, the plaster should keep

warm for eight hours. Aldi and Drogeriemarkt Müller write that their plasters warmed for longer in their own tests than in the Gesundheitstipp test.

The test also showed big differences in the price of the heat patches. The two best products cost around 5 francs each. Others are much cheaper. The cheapest heat patch in the comparison - the Sanactiv product - costs CHF 2.45 each.

### Exercise helps with tense muscles

By the way: If you want to treat tense muscles, you don't necessarily need a heat patch. The sports doctor Walter O. Frey says: "A very good remedy for tension in the neck, shoulders and back is exercise".

Certain yoga exercises can also help with tension in the back. Ten suitable exercises can be found in the Gesundheitstipp leaflet "Yoga against back pain" (see below). If the pain is in the neck area, the leaflet "Exercises for a relaxed neck" can also help. If the pain persists for more than a week, you should see a doctor.

*Jonas Arnold*

#### Free leaflets: "Yoga against back pain" and "Exercises for a relaxed neck".

To download at [www.gesundheitstipp.ch](http://www.gesundheitstipp.ch) or to order from: Gesundheitstipp, "Yoga against back pain" and "Exercises for a relaxed neck", P.O. Box, 8024 Zurich

#### Call: Do you have experience with heat patches?

Write to us: Gesundheitstipp Editorial Office, "Heat patch", P.O. Box, 8024 Zurich, [redaktion@gesundheitstipp.ch](mailto:redaktion@gesundheitstipp.ch)

## This is how the Gesundheitstipp tested

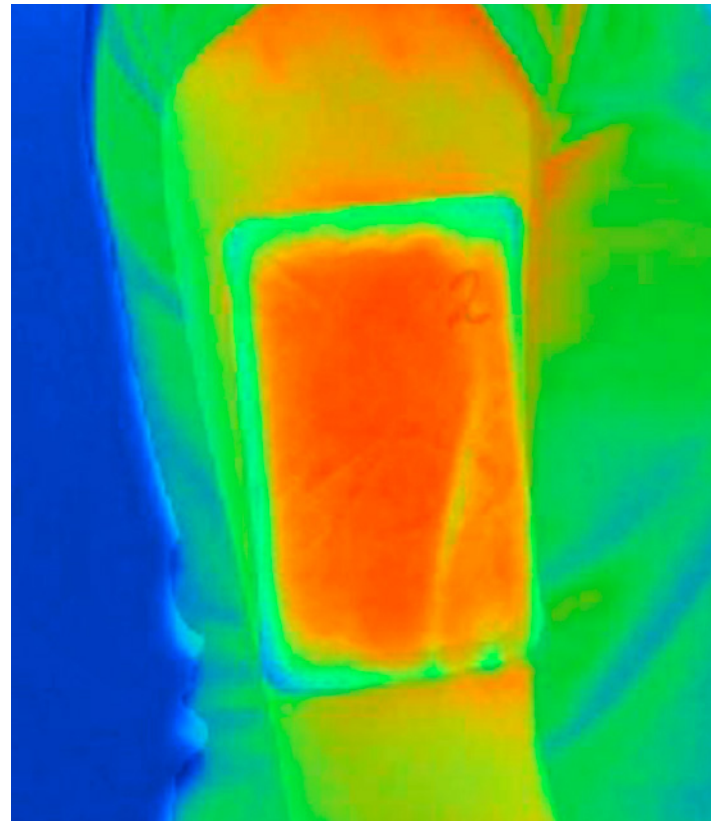
**Experts from the testing institute Ipi in Stuttgart (Germany) tested the thermal performance of the plasters for the Gesundheitstipp and carried out a practical test. In addition, a German chemical laboratory tested the plasters for harmful ingredients. The criteria at a glance.**

► **Thermal performance:** The laboratory experts used a so-called Liebig cooler - a tube that is flushed with warm water - to test the heat output and duration. The machine was set so that the surface temperature of the tube was 35.5 degrees. This value had been determined beforehand on test persons on the skin. The experts stuck three patches per product onto the tube. Then they checked the temperature development

under the plaster for 24 hours.

► **Field test:** Three laboratory experts wore each patch for one day. Afterwards, they evaluated how well the patches could be applied to the back, shoulder and neck, how comfortable they were to wear and whether the patches caused pain when they were removed.

► **Pollutants:** A chemical laboratory checked whether the patches contained allergenic fragrances. No such substances were found in any of the products. The adhesive parts of the patches were also tested for plasticisers and for substances that can form nitrosamines. These are suspected of promoting cancer and damaging growth and metabolism.



Heat patch: Infrared measurement of temperature in the laboratory