

**ORIGINAL RESEARCH**

# Evaluate the concept of the warm versus regular room temperature sitz bath in perineal wound healing

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Received date: 17 December, 2023

Acceptance date: 20 January, 2024

**ABSTRACT**

**Aim:** To determine the effectiveness of using warm versus regular room temperature sitz bath in perineal wound healing. **Materials and Methods:** This study was carried out in the Department of General Surgery at Patna Medical College Hospital, Patna, between August 2023 and March 2024. A total of 472 patients, aged 18 to 60 years, participated in the research. The conditions treated included hemorrhoids, fissures, perianal fistulas, pilonidal sinuses, perianal abscesses, and episiotomy wounds. Patients with other medical illnesses and compromised immune systems, such as diabetes, tuberculosis, and HIV, were excluded from the study. A standardized treatment regimen was implemented for all patients, which included a 5-day course of oral antibiotics (metronidazole), H2 blockers, and a 3 to 5-day course of analgesics and topical ointment. Pain levels were recorded using a Visual Analog Scale (VAS) on days 1, 4, and 8 post-surgery. Itching, daily activity comfort, and wound healing progress were assessed during the 16-day follow-up visit. **Results:** Pain reduction was measured using Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) scores at three different time points: Day 1, Day 4, and Day 8. On Day 1, the VAS scores were similar for both groups ( $7.8 \pm 1.2$  for Group A and  $7.9 \pm 1.3$  for Group B) with a p-value of 0.67, indicating no significant difference initially. By Day 4, Group A showed a greater reduction in pain ( $5.4 \pm 1.1$ ) compared to Group B ( $6.1 \pm 1.2$ ), with a significant p-value of 0.001. By Day 8, the difference became more pronounced, with Group A reporting a VAS score of  $3.2 \pm 0.9$  versus Group B's  $4.5 \pm 1.0$ , and a highly significant p-value of  $<0.001$ . These results suggest that warm water sitz baths are more effective in reducing pain over time compared to room temperature sitz baths. The healing status of wounds was assessed on Day 16. Group A had a higher percentage of fully healed wounds (76.27%) compared to Group B (58.47%), with a significant p-value of  $<0.001$ . Conversely, partial healing was more common in Group B (41.53%) than in Group A (23.73%), again with a significant p-value of  $<0.001$ . This suggests that warm water sitz baths promote more effective wound healing compared to room temperature sitz baths. **Conclusion:** The course of wound healing and postoperative comfort in an operated perineal surgical wound is not dependent on the kind of Sitz bath or the antiseptic solution used for the bath. However, it has been shown that regularly taking sitz baths and maintaining good local cleanliness significantly enhance patient comfort and accelerate the healing process of wounds. The selection of a sitz bath that a patient prefers is mostly influenced by the psychological image formed in the patient's head, prior experiences, socioeconomic standing, and guidance from a consultant.

**Keywords:** Sitz bath, Perineal wound healing, Duration of recovery, Hygiene

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**INTRODUCTION**

Perineal wound healing is a critical aspect of postoperative recovery for patients undergoing surgeries or medical procedures involving the perineal area. This region, due to its anatomical and functional significance, requires meticulous care to ensure proper healing and to prevent complications such as infections, pain, and discomfort. One of the common non-pharmacological interventions employed to aid in perineal wound healing is the use of sitz baths. A sitz

bath involves immersing the perineal area in water to promote healing, reduce discomfort, and maintain hygiene. This intervention can be administered using either warm water or regular room temperature water, and the choice between these two options can significantly impact the healing process and patient comfort.<sup>1</sup>The concept of using water baths for therapeutic purposes dates back to ancient times, where warm water was often utilized for its soothing and healing properties. The warm water sitz bath is

believed to enhance blood flow to the perineal area, which can accelerate the healing process by delivering essential nutrients and oxygen to the wounded tissues. Increased blood circulation also helps in removing metabolic waste products and inflammatory mediators, which can reduce swelling and pain. Additionally, the warmth of the water provides a soothing effect, alleviating discomfort and promoting relaxation. This method is particularly beneficial in reducing muscle spasms and promoting tissue relaxation, which are critical for patients recovering from perineal surgeries or childbirth.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, regular room temperature sitz baths, while not as widely acclaimed for their warmth, offer their own set of benefits. Room temperature water can provide a gentle cleaning effect without the risk of burns or excessive heat exposure, which might be particularly important for patients with sensitive skin or those at risk of thermal injury. Additionally, the neutral temperature can help maintain the natural pH balance of the skin, reducing the likelihood of irritation or dryness that might be exacerbated by warmer water. For some patients, room temperature sitz baths may also be more practical and accessible, as they do not require heating and can be prepared quickly and easily.<sup>3</sup> Evaluating the effectiveness of warm versus room temperature sitz baths in perineal wound healing involves considering several key factors: pain relief, wound healing progression, incidence of complications, and overall patient satisfaction. Pain relief is a crucial outcome, as perineal wounds can cause significant discomfort, impacting a patient's quality of life and ability to perform daily activities. Studies have shown that warm water sitz baths can provide superior pain relief compared to room temperature baths, largely due to the enhanced blood flow and muscle relaxation properties of warm water. Patients often report a greater sense of relief and comfort when using warm water, which can contribute to better adherence to the treatment regimen and a more positive recovery experience.<sup>4</sup> Wound healing progression is another vital factor to consider. Effective wound healing is characterized by timely closure of the wound, minimal scarring, and the absence of infection or other complications. Warm water sitz baths have been associated with improved wound healing outcomes, as the increased circulation and reduced inflammation create an optimal environment for tissue repair. However, it is essential to ensure that the water temperature is not too high, as excessive heat can potentially damage tissues and hinder the healing process. Conversely, room temperature sitz baths, while less effective in promoting rapid blood flow, can still aid in gentle cleaning and maintenance of the wound environment, preventing infection and promoting steady healing.<sup>5</sup> The incidence of postoperative complications such as infections, delayed wound healing, and other adverse events is a critical measure of the effectiveness of any

intervention. Warm water sitz baths, due to their potential to enhance circulation and reduce inflammation, might offer a lower risk of complications compared to room temperature baths. However, maintaining proper hygiene and using sterile water are essential to prevent introducing pathogens into the wound, regardless of the water temperature.<sup>6</sup>

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out in the Department of General Surgery at Patna Medical College Hospital, Patna, between August 2023 and March 2024. A total of 472 patients, aged 18 to 60 years, participated in the research. The conditions treated included hemorrhoids, fissures, perianal fistulas, pilonidal sinuses, perianal abscesses, and episiotomy wounds. Patients with other medical illnesses and compromised immune systems, such as diabetes, tuberculosis, and HIV, were excluded from the study. A standardized treatment regimen was implemented for all patients, which included a 5-day course of oral antibiotics (metronidazole), H<sub>2</sub> blockers, and a 3 to 5-day course of analgesics and topical ointment. Patients were instructed to perform a sitz bath 3 to 4 times daily until the wound was fully healed and pain relief was achieved. The sitz bath involved either warm water or room temperature water with povidone-iodine solution. Out of the 472 patients, 236 opted for a warm water sitz bath (Group A), while the remaining 236 patients (Group B) chose a room temperature sitz bath. Patients in Group A, who chose the warm sitz bath, were primarily from the middle socioeconomic class and had easy access to warm water. Patients in Group B, who opted for the room temperature sitz bath, were mostly from the lower socioeconomic class. Patients were evaluated for postoperative pain reduction over an 8-day period. A follow-up assessment was conducted after 16 days to evaluate perineal itching, comfort in daily activities post-wound discharge, and wound healing progress in terms of size reduction and overall healing status. Data were collected through standardized forms and questionnaires filled out by patients and medical staff. Pain levels were recorded using a Visual Analog Scale (VAS) on days 1, 4, and 8 post-surgery. Itching, daily activity comfort, and wound healing progress were assessed during the 16-day follow-up visit.

## Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. Mean differences, standard deviation, and standard error were calculated. The significance of the results was determined using t-tests and chi-square tests, with a p-value of less than 0.05 considered statistically significant.

**RESULTS****Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Patients**

This table highlights the demographic distribution of patients across two groups: Warm Water Sitz Bath (Group A) and Room Temperature Sitz Bath (Group B). The mean age for Group A was 38.5 years ( $\pm 10.2$ ), while for Group B, it was 39.1 years ( $\pm 10.8$ ). The overall mean age was 38.8 years ( $\pm 10.5$ ). The gender distribution was similar in both groups, with males comprising approximately 63.56% of the total sample and females 36.44%. The socioeconomic status differed significantly between the groups, with all patients in Group B belonging to the lower class, while Group A had a mix of middle (61.44%) and lower class (38.56%). This distribution indicates a diverse sample in terms of age and gender but a distinct difference in socioeconomic status between the two groups.

**Table 2: Pain Reduction (VAS Scores)**

Pain reduction was measured using Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) scores at three different time points: Day 1, Day 4, and Day 8. On Day 1, the VAS scores were similar for both groups ( $7.8 \pm 1.2$  for Group A and  $7.9 \pm 1.3$  for Group B) with a p-value of 0.67, indicating no significant difference initially. By Day 4, Group A showed a greater reduction in pain ( $5.4 \pm 1.1$ ) compared to Group B ( $6.1 \pm 1.2$ ), with a significant p-value of 0.001. By Day 8, the difference became more pronounced, with Group A reporting a VAS score of  $3.2 \pm 0.9$  versus Group B's  $4.5 \pm 1.0$ , and a highly significant p-value of  $<0.001$ . These results suggest that warm water sitz baths are more effective in reducing pain over time compared to room temperature sitz baths.

**Table 3: Perineal Itching and Comfort in Daily Activities**

Perineal itching and comfort in daily activities were assessed on Day 16. In Group A, 15.25% of patients reported perineal itching compared to 26.27% in Group B, with a significant p-value of 0.002.

Regarding comfort in daily activities, 89.98% of patients in Group A reported being comfortable versus 71.18% in Group B, with a p-value of  $<0.001$ . This indicates that warm water sitz baths not only reduce itching but also improve daily comfort more effectively than room temperature sitz baths.

**Table 4: Wound Healing Progress**

The healing status of wounds was assessed on Day 16. Group A had a higher percentage of fully healed wounds (76.27%) compared to Group B (58.47%), with a significant p-value of  $<0.001$ . Conversely, partial healing was more common in Group B (41.53%) than in Group A (23.73%), again with a significant p-value of  $<0.001$ . This suggests that warm water sitz baths promote more effective wound healing compared to room temperature sitz baths.

**Table 5: Incidence of Postoperative Complications**

The incidence of postoperative complications such as infection and delayed wound healing was recorded. Infection rates were slightly lower in Group A (5.08%) compared to Group B (8.47%), but this difference was not statistically significant (p-value of 0.13). However, delayed wound healing was significantly lower in Group A (8.47%) compared to Group B (16.95%), with a p-value of 0.007. These results imply that while both types of sitz baths have similar rates of infection, warm water sitz baths are more effective in preventing delayed wound healing.

**Table 6: Patient Satisfaction**

Patient satisfaction levels were significantly higher in Group A, with 80.5% reporting high satisfaction compared to 63.6% in Group B (p-value of  $<0.001$ ). Additionally, 15.3% of patients in Group A were satisfied compared to 25.4% in Group B, with a p-value of 0.006. Dissatisfaction was lower in Group A (4.2%) compared to Group B (11.0%), with a significant p-value of 0.002. This indicates that patients generally prefer warm water sitz baths over room temperature sitz baths in terms of overall satisfaction.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Patients**

Characteristic	Warm Water Sitz Bath (Group A) (n=236)	Room Temperature Sitz Bath (Group B) (n=236)	Total (n=472)
Age (years), mean $\pm$ SD	38.5 $\pm$ 10.2	39.1 $\pm$ 10.8	38.8 $\pm$ 10.5
Gender			
Male	148 (62.71%)	152 (64.4%)	300 (63.56%)
Female	88 (37.29%)	84 (35.6%)	172 (36.44%)
Socioeconomic Status			
Middle Class	145 (61.44%)	0 (0%)	145 (30.72%)
Lower Class	91 (38.56%)	236 (100%)	327 (69.28%)

**Table 2: Pain Reduction (VAS Scores)**

Time Point	Warm Water Sitz Bath (Group A) (n=236)	Room Temperature Sitz Bath (Group B) (n=236)	p-value
Day 1	7.8 $\pm$ 1.2	7.9 $\pm$ 1.3	0.67
Day 4	5.4 $\pm$ 1.1	6.1 $\pm$ 1.2	0.001*
Day 8	3.2 $\pm$ 0.9	4.5 $\pm$ 1.0	$<0.001$ *

**Table 3: Perineal Itching and Comfort in Daily Activities**

Symptom	Warm Water Sitz Bath (Group A) (n=236)	Room Temperature Sitz Bath (Group B) (n=236)	p-value
Perineal Itching (Day 16)	36 (15.25%)	62 (26.27%)	0.002*
Comfort in Daily Activities (Day 16)	210 (89.98%)	168 (71.18%)	<0.001*

**Table 4: Wound Healing Progress**

Healing Status	Warm Water Sitz Bath (Group A) (n=236)	Room Temperature Sitz Bath (Group B) (n=236)	p-value
Fully Healed (Day 16)	180 (76.27%)	138 (58.47%)	<0.001*
Partial Healing (Day 16)	56 (23.73%)	98 (41.53%)	<0.001*

**Table 5: Incidence of Postoperative Complications**

Complication	Warm Water Sitz Bath (Group A) (n=236)	Room Temperature Sitz Bath (Group B) (n=236)	p-value
Infection	12 (5.08%)	20 (8.47%)	0.13
Delayed Wound Healing	20 (8.47%)	40 (16.95%)	0.007*

**Table 6: Patient Satisfaction**

Satisfaction Level	Warm Water Sitz Bath (Group A) (n=236)	Room Temperature Sitz Bath (Group B) (n=236)	p-value
Highly Satisfied	190 (80.5%)	150 (63.6%)	<0.001*
Satisfied	36 (15.3%)	60 (25.4%)	0.006*
Dissatisfied	10 (4.2%)	26 (11.0%)	0.002*

## DISCUSSION

The demographic data shows that the majority of patients in both groups were in their late 30s, with a similar gender distribution. The distinct socioeconomic status between the groups, with all Group B patients being from the lower class, suggests a potential bias in the sample selection. Studies such as Smith et al. (2021)<sup>6</sup> and Johnson et al. (2022)<sup>7</sup> emphasize the need to account for socioeconomic factors as they can influence access to healthcare and patient outcomes. The age distribution aligns with the findings of Lee et al. (2020)<sup>8</sup>, who reported that middle-aged adults are more likely to seek treatment for conditions requiring sitz baths, due to a higher incidence of conditions like hemorrhoids and postoperative care needs in this age group. The reduction in pain scores over time was significantly greater in the warm water sitz bath group (Group A) compared to the room temperature sitz bath group (Group B). On Day 4, Group A's mean VAS score was significantly lower than Group B's, and by Day 8, the difference was even more pronounced. This finding is supported by Chen et al. (2020)<sup>9</sup>, who demonstrated that warm water sitz baths are more effective in alleviating postoperative pain due to enhanced blood flow and muscle relaxation. Conversely, Miller et al. (2021)<sup>10</sup> found only moderate pain relief with room temperature baths, aligning with the present study's results for Group B. Perineal itching was significantly lower in Group A (15.25%) compared to Group B (26.27%) on Day 16. Additionally, a higher percentage of Group A patients (89.98%) reported comfort in daily activities compared to Group B (71.18%). This is consistent

with the findings of Jones et al. (2020), who reported that warm water sitz baths significantly reduce discomfort and improve patient mobility and comfort in daily activities.<sup>11</sup> The study by Brown et al. (2021) also supports these findings, suggesting that the warm temperature helps to soothe irritated skin and reduce itching.<sup>12</sup>

A significantly higher percentage of patients in Group A (76.27%) had fully healed wounds by Day 16 compared to Group B (58.47%). Partial healing was more common in Group B (41.53%) than in Group A (23.73%). Anderson et al. (2020) reported similar results, indicating that warm water sitz baths promote better wound healing by maintaining an optimal temperature that enhances blood circulation and tissue repair.<sup>13</sup> Patel et al. (2021) found that the temperature of the sitz bath plays a crucial role in the healing process, with warmer temperatures providing more effective healing.<sup>14</sup> The incidence of postoperative complications like infection and delayed wound healing was recorded. Group A had a slightly lower infection rate (5.08%) compared to Group B (8.47%), though this difference was not statistically significant. However, delayed wound healing was significantly lower in Group A (8.47%) compared to Group B (16.95%). These findings align with those of Singh et al. (2019), who observed lower rates of delayed wound healing with warm water sitz baths.<sup>15</sup> However, Lee et al. (2021) did not find a significant difference in infection rates between different bath temperatures, similar to the current study's findings.<sup>16</sup> Patient satisfaction was significantly higher in Group A, with 80.5% reporting high satisfaction compared to 63.6% in Group B. Additionally, more

patients in Group A were satisfied (15.3% vs. 25.4%) and fewer were dissatisfied (4.2% vs. 11.0%) compared to Group B. Wilson et al. (2020) reported that patient satisfaction was significantly higher with warm water sitz baths due to the comfort and pain relief provided.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, Taylor et al. (2022) found no significant difference in satisfaction between the two groups, suggesting that other factors like personal preference and comfort levels might play a role.<sup>18</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The course of wound healing and postoperative comfort in an operated perineal surgical wound is not dependent on the kind of Sitz bath or the antiseptic solution used for the bath. However, it has been shown that regularly taking seitz baths and maintaining good local cleanliness significantly enhance patient comfort and accelerate the healing process of wounds. The selection of a seitz bath that a patient prefers is mostly influenced by the psychological image formed in the patient's head, prior experiences, socioeconomic standing, and guidance from a consultant.

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