PURPOSE:
To measure the body temperature when taking an oral temperature would be unsafe or inaccurate.

CONSIDERATIONS:
1. Rectal temperature should be taken:
   a. When the patient is having warm or cold applications on his/her face or neck.
   b. When the patient cannot keep his/her mouth closed around the thermometer, e.g., stroke or facial surgery.
   c. When the patient finds it hard to breathe through his/her nose.
   d. When the patient's mouth is dry or inflamed.
   e. When the patient is unconscious or confused.
   f. When the patient is getting oxygen by cannula, catheter or facemask.
2. Normal rectal temperature is 99.6 degrees Fahrenheit (37.5 degrees Celsius)
3. To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit, multiply degrees Celsius by 9/5 and add 32. To convert Fahrenheit to Celsius, subtract 32 from degrees Fahrenheit and multiply by 5/9.
4. DO NOT use a mercury thermometer. Encourage the patient/caregiver to obtain a digital or disposable thermometer.
5. If non-mercury-in-glass thermometer is used, follow manufacturer's guidelines for use.
6. Rectal temperatures are to be done only when assigned by the nurse.

EQUIPMENT:
Rectal thermometer
Disposable thermometer sheaths
Tissues
Lubricating jelly
Soap and water
Gloves
Alcohol or antiseptic wipes

PROCEDURE:
1. Adhere to Standard Precautions.
2. Explain procedure to patient.
3. Shake thermometer until the alcohol is below 97 degrees Fahrenheit or 35 degrees Celsius mark. If using a digital thermometer, turn on the thermometer.
4. Inspect thermometer for cracks or chips. DO NOT use if you see any.
5. Clean thermometer with alcohol wipe, place disposable sheath on thermometer.
6. Place a small amount of lubricating jelly on a piece of tissue.
7. Lubricate the bulb end of the thermometer with lubricating jelly to make insertion easier and more comfortable for the patient.
8. Ask the patient to turn on his/her side. If unable to turn, position patient on side. Turn back the top covers just enough to expose the patient's buttocks. Avoid overexposing patient.
9. With one hand, raise the upper buttock to expose anus. With the other hand, gently insert the thermometer 1 inch into the rectum.
10. Hold the thermometer in place for 3 to 5 minutes or as instructed by the manufacturer, if user manual is available. When using digital thermometer hold in place until it beeps. Never leave a patient alone with a thermometer in the rectum, no matter what his/her condition.
11. Remove the thermometer from the patient's rectum. Hold the stem end of the thermometer; wipe it with tissue from stem to bulb to remove particles of feces and the disposable sheath.
12. Read the thermometer.
13. Shake down the mercury in thermometer.
14. Clean the thermometer with alcohol wipe; return to case.
15. Position the patient for comfort and safety.
16. Discard soiled supplies in appropriate containers.

AFTER CARE:
1. Document in patient's record:
   a. Temperature.
   b. Method used.
   c. Observation of the patient.
2. Report any deviation from normal temperature to supervisor.

REFERENCE: