

Pharmacy department

# How to use potassium permanganate soaks

## Information for patients

Your medical team has recommended that you use potassium permanganate soaks. This leaflet provides guidance on how to prepare and use potassium permanganate tablets as a soak. This information is not intended to replace your doctor's advice but offers further support. **Please read this information carefully.** If you have any questions, please contact the medicine information department on 020 3311 1703 (Monday-Friday, 09.00-17.00).

### What is potassium permanganate?

It is a mild antiseptic and astringent (something that dries the skin). It comes in the form of a solution or tablets (Permitabs<sup>®</sup>) that you dissolve in water (also known as soaks).

Potassium permanganate soaks can be used to treat a range of skin conditions including:

- infected eczema
- leg ulcers that may be weeping (leaking) or blistering
- wounds on your skin

Potassium permanganate is for **external use only**. **Never swallow the tablets or take them internally – this can be fatal.**

### How to use potassium permanganate

Always wear gloves before touching the potassium permanganate soaks as they can stain and irritate your hands.

#### 1. Preparing to use potassium permanganate soaks

The hospital pharmacy (or your local pharmacy if the prescription was written by your GP) will give you the potassium permanganate tablets. The strength of each tablet is 400 milligrams (mg).

- Start by washing your hands, then put on your gloves.
- You will need a clean container that is large enough to fit the parts of your body that need soaking. It is best to set aside a particular container to use for your soaks, and **not** to use it for any other purpose, such as drinking or food preparation.



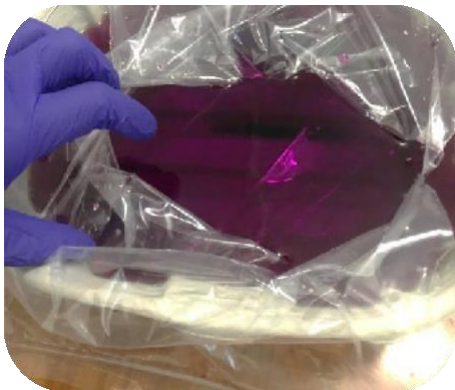
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- Line the container with a clear or light-coloured bin liner bag
  - Fill this with **four** litres (4,000ml) of warm - **not hot** - tap water
  - Add one Permitabs<sup>®</sup> tablet and mix gently until it has completely dissolved. The water should turn a light pink colour



- The solution is now ready to use for soaking

## 2. Using potassium permanganate solution soaks

- If you are treating your hands or feet, put Vaseline<sup>®</sup> on your nails first to stop them from ~~growing~~
- Place the affected areas into the water



- Soak for 10-15 minutes then remove from the water and pat the area dry. Alternatively, we may recommend soaking a gauze dressing in the solution and applying it to your skin for 10 minutes.
- Pour the solution down the sink and rinse the container thoroughly
- Apply any prescribed cream or ointment and/or dressings to the affected area(s)

We usually recommend that you do this once a day until the weeping has stopped or as advised by your doctor.

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## Possible side effects of potassium permanganate solution soaks

- Skin irritation if the solution has not been diluted properly
- It can irritate the eyes and mucous membranes (e.g. mouth, nose, ears, genitals, anus) – avoid contact with these areas
- Skin dryness
- It can burn your skin if you soak your skin for too long
- Staining of clothing, fabrics and ceramic basins
- Do not eat or drink when using this product

### If you accidentally swallow a tablet or solution of potassium permanganate:

- drink plenty of water
- do not try to make yourself vomit
- seek medical attention immediately

**Store the potassium permanganate tablets and equipment in a safe place, out of the reach of children.**

If you need more information or have any questions, please contact the medicine information department on **020 3311 1703** (Monday-Friday, 09.00-17.00).

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at **imperial.pals@nhs.net** The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department  
Fourth floor  
Salton House  
St Mary's Hospital  
Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: **ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net**

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

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## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
**[imperial.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.patient.information@nhs.net)**

## Wi-fi

We have a free wi-fi service for basic filtered browsing and a premium wi-fi service (requiring payment) at each of our five hospitals. Look for WiFiSPARK\_FREE or WiFiSPARK\_PREMIUM