



St John's Institute of Dermatology

The use of Milton[®] baths in dermatology

The leaflet aims to answer your questions about using Milton baths to treat your skin condition. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What are Milton baths?

Milton baths are made up by mixing Milton Sterilising Fluid in bath water. Milton Sterilising Fluid can be bought from most local pharmacies or supermarkets. Milton Sterilising Fluid is a form of bleach and contains sodium hypochlorite 2%. Milton Sterilising Fluid is recommended over other bleach formulations as it does not contain colouring agents or perfumes so it is less likely to cause stinging or irritation and also because it comes as a standard strength.

You may have heard about treatments called 'dilute bleach baths'. A small quantity of the Milton Sterilising Fluid is added to warm bath water to form the Milton Bath which is a similar strength to swimming pool water. When you bathe in the solution, it helps to reduce levels of a certain bacteria on your skin called *Staph. aureus*. This type of bacteria is found on most people's skin in small quantities and there is evidence that when there is too much *Staph. aureus* on the skin, certain skin conditions such as eczema can become worse.



The addition of Milton Sterilising Fluid to bath water is not recommended by the manufacturer, however there is some evidence to support using it in this way for dermatology patients where indicated by a healthcare professional.

How do I make a Milton bath?

Milton baths are usually recommended for use twice a week. Your doctor or nurse will tell you how often they think you need to use the baths. To make up the bath follow the instructions below (the quantities are for a full-size standard bath):

125mls of Milton Sterilising Fluid in 60 litres of water (roughly ½ bath full)

62mls of Milton Sterilising Fluid in 30 litres of water (roughly ¼ bath full)

1. Put Milton Sterilising Fluid into an empty bath (quantity to depend on how much water you are adding to bath, as above)
2. Add **lukewarm** water to bath tub. Ensure that the Milton Sterilising Fluid and bath water are mixed well.
3. Soak in the bath for 10 minutes up to your neck. Do not splash water on the face or head as it will irritate the eyes.
4. Rinse skin well with fresh warm water to prevent dryness and irritation.
5. Pat skin with a towel. Do not rub.
6. Immediately apply any prescribed emollients and other medicines as directed.

If you have been advised by your doctor or nurse to use Milton baths as a hand or foot soak you can follow the instructions above but instead add 15mls of Milton Sterilising Fluid to a washing-up bowl or bucket, and then add 7.5 litres of water before soaking hands or feet for 10 minutes.

Is there anything else I need to know?

- Do not use undiluted Milton Sterilising Fluid on the skin. If this occurs, rinse off immediately with tap water. It is recommended that you wear gloves, such as washing-up gloves, when preparing the bath to avoid this happening.
- If Milton baths are made using very hot water there is a risk that you may scald your skin so take care to only use warm water that you can comfortably sit in. Using very hot water for Milton baths can sometimes cause you to cough and irritate your airways because you are more likely to breathe in any bleach fumes.
- As Milton Sterilising Fluid is a type of bleach it can cause bleaching of clothing and towels so try to avoid any direct contact.
- It is important that you do not use Milton baths if you have any open wounds on the skin as this may cause stinging or burning.
- It is very important that you store the Milton Sterilising Fluid separately to any medication and out of the reach and sight of children to avoid accidental swallowing. If you think you or somebody else may have swallowed any of the liquid you must seek medical attention immediately.

What should I do if I forget to have a Milton bath?

If you forget to have your Milton bath then you can have it the following day but try to avoid having it more than the recommended number of times per week that your doctor or nurse has advised (usually twice per week). You should leave at least two days between your Milton baths to reduce the risk of irritation.

Are there any side effects?

Most patients tolerate Milton baths well. Occasionally, you may experience a mild discomfort on your skin. If this happens, empty the bath and immediately rinse off with warm water then apply your usual emollient and topical treatment. If you experience any irritation or adverse effects, stop having Milton Baths and speak to your dermatology doctor or nurse on 020 7188 7847.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about Milton Baths, please speak to the nurse or doctor looking after you. You can contact the dermatology department on 020 7188 7847. If it's urgent, please call the hospital switchboard on 020 7188 7188 and ask to speak to the on-call dermatologist.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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