



WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THIS LEAFLET?

This leaflet explains how to safely use potassium permanganate solution soaks. These are prepared using potassium permanganate tablets for cutaneous solution – that is, a solution used on the skin only.

WHAT IS POTASSIUM PERMANGANATE?

Potassium permanganate is a chemical that works as a mild antiseptic. It can also help dry weepy skin. It is available as tablets, crystals or a liquid.

Potassium permanganate must be diluted before use and is for external use only.

This means that it should only be used on the skin, never swallowed or put in the mouth.

Important safety advice:

1. Never swallow potassium permanganate – it can be fatal if taken by mouth.
2. Always dilute in water before use.
3. Store tablets in a safe place, away from children and vulnerable adults.
4. Always wear disposable, protective gloves when handling to avoid staining or irritation of your hands.

WHAT SKIN CONDITIONS ARE TREATED WITH POTASSIUM PERMANGANATE SOAK?

Potassium permanganate soaks can help include with weepy or blistering conditions such as:

- weeping or infected [eczema](#)
- [leg ulcers](#).

HOW TO PREPARE AND USE THE SOAK SAFELY?

The solution should be freshly prepared for each use. If the unused solution is kept, it will react with oxygen in the air and become ineffective.

1. Wearing disposable protective gloves.
2. Line a clean container with a clean white plastic bin bag. This helps you check the

colour of the water when adding the potassium permanganate to it.

3. Fill the lined container with **4 litres of warm tap water**.
4. Add **1** potassium permanganate tablet and allow it to dissolve completely in the water.
5. The water should turn light pink. If it is darker in colour and you are unsure if it has been diluted as explained above, do **not** use it.

Never use undiluted potassium permanganate.

HOW TO APPLY THE SOAK

- If soaking hands or feet: place them in the diluted solution in a large enough container for **10–15 minutes**.
- For larger areas (for example, legs), the solution can be added to a bath.
- For small areas (under breasts or groin), soak clean gauze in the solution and place on the skin for **10-15 minutes**.

Before soaking

Apply petroleum jelly (for example, Vaseline®) to the nails to stop staining.

After soaking

Gently pat the skin dry with a clean towel but beware that your towel might become stained.

If the treatment is taking place at home, dispose of the used solution by pouring it down the toilet or sink.

Potassium permanganate solution may stain containers and baths, showers, and wash basins, and irritate the skin. Clean thoroughly any containers or surfaces it has touched after use.

Aftercare

Once the affected area has been soaked and dried:

- Apply any prescribed cream or ointment.
- Use dressings if advised.
- Repeat as recommended by your healthcare professional.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I HAVE POTASSIUM PERMANGANATE SOAKS?

This will depend on the skin condition being treated and how you react to the treatment. Always use potassium permanganate as prescribed by your healthcare professional.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF POTASSIUM PERMANGANATE SOAKS?

- Dry skin.
- Skin irritation or burns, especially if not properly diluted.
- Stinging or irritation if it touches the eyes, mouth, nose, or genitals.
- Stains skin, fabrics, and ceramics.
- **Harmful if swallowed.** If swallowed, seek medical help immediately.

HOW WILL I BE MONITORED FOR THE SIDE EFFECTS OF POTASSIUM PERMANGANATE SOAKS?

If you are receiving treatment in clinic, your healthcare professional will check your skin before and after treatment. If you are using the treatment at home, please contact your healthcare professional if:

- you have concerns about its use or
- you are experiencing side effects such as irritation of your skin.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY?

Potassium permanganate can be extremely harmful if swallowed.

If you accidentally swallow it:

- Drink a small glass of milk or water
- Go to A&E or call 999 immediately

If it gets into your eyes:

- Try not to rub or keep them closed.
- Wash with plenty of water for at least 15 minutes.
- Remove contact lenses if you wear any.
- **Contact NHS 111 online or by phone immediately.**

It is important to report suspected side effects of medicines. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) manages the Yellow Card scheme. This scheme collects information and safety concerns about medicines and medical devices. Anyone can report these side effects or concerns by using:

- the Yellow Card website [mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](https://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard) or
- the Yellow Card app

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POTASSIUM PERMANGANATE?

DermNet NZ:
<http://www.dermnetnz.org/treatments/permanganate.html>

Jargon Buster: www.skinhealthinfo.org.uk/support-resources/jargon-buster/

Please note that the BAD provides web links to additional resources to help people access a range of information about their treatment or skin condition. The views expressed in these external resources may not be shared by the BAD or its members. The BAD has no control of and does not endorse the content of external links.

This leaflet aims to provide accurate information about the subject and is a consensus of the views held by representatives of the British Association of Dermatologists: individual patient circumstances may differ, which might alter both the advice and course of therapy given to you by your doctor.

This leaflet has been assessed for readability by the British Association of Dermatologists' Patient Information Lay Review Panel

BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF DERMATOLOGISTS

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

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