

## **Antiseptic Baths (Bleach Bath) for the treatment of eczema**

*(to use after discussion with your doctor or eczema team)*

### **What are Antiseptic Baths?**

Antiseptic baths contain *very* diluted Bleach (0.005% sodium hypochlorite (NaOCL)), a household chemical commonly used as a disinfectant. **You must never use undiluted bleach directly on skin.** Several studies have shown that bleach at this low concentration when mixed in well with the bath water is not harmful to skin, and that it may be effective as a disinfectant against many types of harmful bacteria on the skin like *Staph. aureus* (including MRSA), which can worsen some skin conditions such as eczema.

Milton® Sterilising Fluid (MSF) is a bleach solution that contains 2% NaOCL. It is recommended for use in antiseptic baths as it does not contain additional additives such as perfumes. This is why antiseptic baths are often called Milton baths.

### **Who should use antiseptic baths?**

Antiseptic baths may be helpful for people with skin infections. People who have eczema often have *Staph. aureus* on the skin all the time. Sometimes the bacteria get out of control, especially if the inflammation from the eczema is poorly controlled, leading to repeated skin infections. Usually the best answer to treating skin infections in eczema is to treat the eczema better, but sometimes, the health care professional looking after your child's eczema may advise you that your child might benefit from a short course of antiseptic baths.

### **Are there any side effects?**

When used according to instructions, most people tolerate antiseptic baths well. Some may experience mild skin irritation. If this happens, rinse off thoroughly with fresh water (do not use water from the bleach bath to rinse) and apply your usual topical treatments or emollient. If you experience more severe side effects, such as very dry skin or nasal irritation, stop using bleach baths.

Written by Professor Hywel Williams, Dr Jane Ravenscroft, Nurse Consultant Sandra Lawton, Dr Jothsana Srinivasan, Dr Ting Seng Tang, Advanced Nurse Practitioner Nicola Housam (United Lincolnshire Hospital Trust) and parents on behalf of the Nottingham Support Group for Carers of Children with Eczema

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### How do I prepare an antiseptic bath?

The bath should be prepared to contain approximately 2ml of Milton Sterilising fluid (MSF) per 1litre of water

One capful of Milton is 30mls.

The following instructions apply for an average bath filled  $\frac{1}{4}$  full (approximately 30 litres of water).

1. Put two capfuls (60 ml) of Milton sterilising fluid into an empty bathtub.
2. Add lukewarm water to  $\frac{1}{4}$  filled bath. Be certain that the bleach is mixed thoroughly with the water.
3. Let your child soak in the bath water for about 10 minutes. The whole body needs to be submerged. Carers might like to make it a game with their children, for example blowing bubbles in the water, or a jug of bath water over the head. It's just the same as a swimming pool.
4. Thoroughly rinse or shower the skin with plain, warm (not hot) water at the end of the bleach bath using your emollient as a soap substitute.
5. Pat skin dry. Do not rub as this is the same as scratching.
6. Then apply your emollient as normal.

The amount of Milton 2% can be adjusted as follows depending on the type of bath and how much you fill it:

- Four capfuls (120 ml) Milton in  $\frac{1}{2}$  filled bath
- Half a capful Milton (15ml) in  $\frac{1}{2}$  filled baby bath (7.5 litres)

Repeat antiseptic baths 2 to 3 times a week or as prescribed by the physician.

### Are there any precautions I should know about?

- **Never use undiluted bleach directly on skin**
- **Keep bleach bottle out of reach of children.**
- Antiseptic baths may sting if there are lots of breaks and open areas in the skin.
- Avoid any direct contact of bleach with eyes. If this happens, rinse with lots of fresh water. Seek medical advice if eye discomfort or problems with eyesight occur.
- Do not swallow bleach. Seek medical attention immediately if any of the liquid has been swallowed.
- Do not use antiseptic baths in those with a known contact allergy to chlorine.
- Direct contact of bleach solution may whiten clothing/towels.

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