



Many people carry bacteria called *Staphylococcus aureus* on their skin. This is particularly common in children and adults who suffer from eczema.

Complete eradication of *Staphylococcus aureus* in patients with eczema is very difficult, however some therapies can reduce the number of organisms which live on the skin, and this helps reduce the skin infections and improve eczema control.

An eczema bleach bath can kill bacteria on the skin, reducing itching, redness, and scaling. This is most effective when combined with other eczema treatments, such as medication and moisturiser.

What you need

1. White King household bleach (4.2% sodium hypochlorite unscented)
2. Pool salt
3. Bath oil
4. Measuring cup
5. Standard sized bucket (10 litres)

How to give a bleach bath

- Fill the bath* with tap water to the desired level using a standard-sized bucket. Count the number of buckets you use. Then mark your bath with tape so you don't need to use the buckets again.
- Add 12 mL of bleach for every 10 litres of water (final bleach concentration of 0.005%).
- Add 1-2 capfuls of bath oil per bath
- Add 100 grams (1/3 cup) of pool salt for each bucket (10 litres of water)
- Let the patient soak in the bath for 10 minutes.
- Wash the patient's head and face with the bath water. You can immerse their head in the water as the concentration of bleach is very low and it will not cause any problems.
- Wipe away any crusting or weeping at the infected area while the patient is in the bath. Use a soft disposable towel (eg a Chux-type cloth) and throw it away afterwards.
- Do not rinse your child's skin after the bath.
- Use old or white towels to avoid possible bleaching of coloured towels.
- Repeat the bleach baths as often as recommended by your health professional.

Possible side effects

Household bleach can sometimes cause a stinging or a burning sensation on the skin. The instructions outlined in this fact sheet are for a very diluted bleach bath, which means there is less risk of stinging happening. The final bleach concentration is lower than a swimming pool, which most people can safely swim in without damage to their skin or hair. If the patient does have stinging or irritation in the diluted bleach bath, rinse them off with plain water. Discuss this with your health professional before giving them another bleach bath.

Patients with eczema should have a bleach bath:

- every day for one month, then
- three times a week for one month, then
- once a week for one month
- if the eczema starts to flare again, increase the frequency then wean off.

Key points to remember

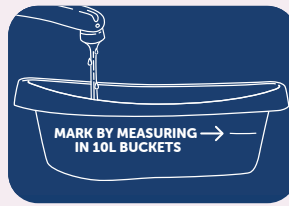
- Diluted bleach baths are safe and effective in reducing skin bacteria.
- Add 12 mL of bleach per 10 litres of bath water.
- Do not rinse the skin after a bleach bath
- People who are sensitive to bleach or have allergic asthma may find that bleach or chlorine fumes can irritate their skin or respiratory system.
- Bleach baths can be painful for people who have extremely dry skin
- Anyone thinking about incorporating a bleach bath into their own or their child's eczema skin care routine should speak to a doctor or healthcare professional first.



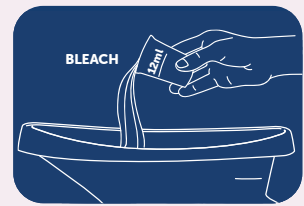
A step by step guide to use Bleach Baths



Before you start, wash and dry your hands



Fill the bath with water to the level needed using the 10 litre bucket so that you can measure how much water you are adding



Add 12mL of bleach for each 10 litre bucket of water poured into the bath (for a half full family bath, add 1/4 cup of bleach). If recommended add salt and bath oil.



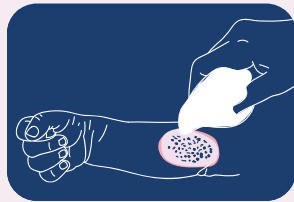
IF RECOMMENDED
Add 1/3 cup of salt for each 10 litre bucket of water poured



IF RECOMMENDED
Add 1-2 capfuls of bath oil



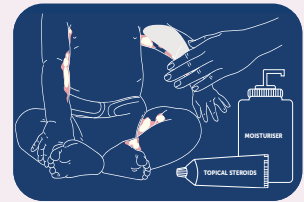
Wash your child in the bath making sure to wet the child's face and head, taking care not to get water in the child's eyes



If your child has eczema sores and crusts, gently clean these areas to try and remove the crust



Once your child is clean, take them out of the bleach bath – do not rinse your child after bathing. Dry your child by patting them gently with a towel



Apply topical steroids and moisturisers as directed by your doctor or nurse practitioner



Side effects and risks of bleach baths

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Information contained in this article was obtained from RCH, The Mayo Clinic & NEA

Note: If you do not have access to a bath, use a large watering can to make up the solution - pour over your skin after showering and do not rinse off. It is not the policy of the Eczema Association of Australasia Inc to recommend or endorse any product or treatment. It is part of the role of the Association to provide information on a wide range of products and treatments to keep those involved with eczema as fully informed as possible as to all options available. For medical advice, consult your health professional.



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We're here to help!

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