

Help Skin Heal with Saline Soaks

For patients with sore, dry and itchy skin

Some treatments such as radiation therapy can cause sore, dry and itchy skin. In some cases, skin may develop blisters and become broken (cracked). Doing saline soaks can help you keep your skin clean and help it heal.

This pamphlet will show you how to:

- Make normal saline at home
- Buy normal saline at the store and where to get it
- Do a saline soak to your skin



How to make normal saline at home

A recipe for 1 quart (32 ounces or 1000 millilitres)

Things you will need:

- ✓ a clean pot to boil water
- ✓ table salt
- ✓ clean jar with a lid
- ✓ clean soft cloth such as a face cloth or reusable towel
- ✓ clean bowl

Instructions:

- Measure 4 cups of tap water and pour it into the pot.
- Add 2 teaspoons of table salt to the water.
- Cover the pot. Bring solution to a boil and mix until the salt is dissolved. Be sure to keep the lid on the pot.
- Remove the pot from the heat. Keep the lid on the pot while the normal saline cools to room temperature.
- Pour the normal saline into a clean jar. Close the jar tightly with a clean lid.
- Label the jar with the date and time you made the normal saline.
- Throw away any unused saline solution after 2 days.



TIP: You can make a smaller amount if you want by cutting the ingredients in half. For example, use 1 leveled teaspoon of salt for 2 cups of water or ½ leveled teaspoon of salt for 1 cup of water.

If you don't want to make your own normal saline

You can buy normal saline (already made) at most drug stores. Make sure the bottle says the concentration of the saline solution is **0.9%**. This may be used straight out of the bottle without boiling.

Do not use saline solution that is used for contact lenses.

How to do a saline soak to your skin

Instructions:

- Wash your hands before you start.
- Put the clean, soft cloth in the bowl .
- Pour the saline solution into the bowl until the cloth is wet.
- Pick up the cloth and gently squeeze it to wring out extra saline.
- Sit or lie down with the damp cloth.
- Remove clothing off the affected (reddened, cracked or open) area of the skin.
- Put the cloth on the affected area for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Remove the cloth before it dries. If it dries, add more saline solution to dampen the cloth before removing it from your skin.
- Leave the area open to the air for 1 to 2 minutes to let the skin air dry.
- **Do not** rub the area.
- Wash your hands when you are finished.

Always use a new cloth and clean bowl each time you do the soaks.

What temperature should the saline soak be?

Most people prefer the saline soak to be at room temperature.

How often should I do saline soaks?

You can do a saline soak 3 to 4 times a day. Keep doing the saline soaks until the area is healed, even after the radiation treatment has finished.

What do I put on the skin after I do the saline soak?

You may not need to put anything on, or you may need to use an ointment or non-stick dressing if the skin is broken and open. It is up to you and your health care team.

- Avoid putting talcum powder or cornstarch on cracked or open skin.
- Avoid putting lotion, cream or any moisturizers on the cracked or open skin unless your doctor or nurse said it's OK.

The development of patient education resources is supported by the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation.

Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.com for more health information.

Contact us to provide feedback or request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats: pfep@uhn.ca

© 2018 University Health Network. All rights reserved.

Use this material for your information only. It does not replace advice from your doctor or other health care professional. Do not use this information for diagnosis or treatment. Ask your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. You may print 1 copy of this brochure for non-commercial and personal use only.

Author: Angela Cashell | Reviewed: 03/2018 | Form: D-5017