

Epsom Salt Soaks for Pin Sites



Warning: This “Super Soak” with Epsom salts should not be used in cases where there are open wounds (other than the pin sites themselves).

One method of keeping pin sites clean is through the use of Epsom salt soaks. The use of Epsom salt has long been a folk remedy for a number of problems, and some orthopedic surgeons believe that it can be beneficial for patients with external fixators. This procedure may be used for patients of any age.

If your doctor recommends these soaks, (and you have no open wounds other than the pin sites themselves), we recommend the following procedure, starting approximately ten days after surgery:

Mix the following in a clean 5-gallon bucket or white plastic kitchen trash can*:

- Warm clean water – approximately 5 gallons
- 1 cup of Epsom salt
- 2 tablespoons of Clorox

*(You may need the larger container if your fixator has a “foot plate” on it.)

Stir these together and then soak the extremity with the fixator. Soak for approximately 10 minutes every day. If the pin sites are red or inflamed, then do this twice a day.

Afterwards, you may pat dry with a towel (be careful not to get the wires caught in the towel!), let it air dry, or use a hair dryer on a cool setting.

Remember to clean the bucket thoroughly and to use a new solution each time.

This may make the skin dry. Remember that you *cannot* put lotion near the pins themselves, however you may apply it on the intact skin, well away from the pins. Avoid an area about the size of a half dollar (approximately 30 mm) around the actual pin site. Some people may find using a foam stick, such as a small foam paint brush, helpful for applying lotion.

If you have medical conditions, please consult with your medical doctor because there is some evidence that the ingredients in the Epsom Salt (magnesium and sulfate) can be absorbed through the skin¹. Since magnesium can help relax muscles, this might be beneficial for certain patients.

Recipe courtesy of our colleague William Terrell, MD of Marietta, GA

¹https://www.epsomsaltcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/report_on_absorption_of_magnesium_sulfate.pdf