

# Paste bandages and how to apply them

**This leaflet aims to answer your questions about paste bandaging and provide you with a step-by-step guide on how to apply your paste bandages at home.**

We recommend you also watch our online demonstration video called Paste bandages - [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/dermatologyvideos](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/dermatologyvideos) to help understand how to apply the bandages. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What is a paste bandage?

Paste bandages are fabric bandages impregnated with a medicated paste such as zinc oxide or ichthammol. These ingredients have wound healing and mild antiseptic properties.

Paste bandages can be prescribed by your healthcare professional or purchased without a prescription from your local pharmacy (they may need time to order this in for you). Your doctor or nurse will advise you on which bandages they feel would be most suitable for your skin condition.

## Who can use them?

Paste bandages can be used for the treatment of inflamed, lichenified (thickened) or itchy skin conditions, such as eczema or nodular prurigo. They can also be used in the management of venous eczema and venous leg ulcers.

Paste bandages are suitable in both adults and children.

## What are the benefits of using them?

- Paste bandages can help soften thickened skin
- Soothe and reduce inflammation
- Cool and provide relief for itchy skin
- Help to break the itch-scratch cycle by forming a protective barrier
- Prevent damage to the skin from scratching and help the skin to heal.

## What are the risks of using them?

- Hair follicles may become irritated which may cause spots or tiny bumps on the skin (folliculitis).
- There is a chance of being allergic to ingredients in the bandages. They should not be used if you are allergic to any of the listed ingredients. An allergic reaction may be redness, rash or irritation of the skin.

- Care should be taken as paste bandages can increase the absorbency and effects of topical steroids. (Although this enhanced effect of the topical steroid is often needed for a short period of time to help the skin condition settle).
- They should not be used over topical calcineurin inhibitors (Tacrolimus (Protopic®) and Pimecrolimus (Elidel®) due to risk of absorbing into the skin.
- They should not be used if the skin is infected as this can make it worse. Ask for advice from your healthcare professional if you think you might have an infection.
- Paste bandages are non-elastic and there is no freedom of movement once dried out. This could lead to areas of swelling or constriction of circulation if applied incorrectly.

## Where can I apply them?

They are usually used on arms or legs but can be applied to the body and face (with caution). Ask your healthcare professional for advice.

## What do I need to prepare before applying the paste bandage?

- paste bandage
- towel
- clean pair of scissors
- emollient and topical treatment as prescribed by your healthcare professional
- Secondary covering: outer bandage to prevent slippage and staining of clothing and surroundings (for example a tubular viscose bandage).

## How do I apply the paste bandage?

It will be easier if you have someone at home to help apply the bandages for you. If not you may be able to apply your own bandages to the legs or to smaller selected areas of skin.

They are two methods of application:

1. The **pleating method** which is commonly used when applying bandages to the limbs.
2. The **cutting and overlapping method** which is commonly used on smaller areas for example: wrist, ankle or individual fingers and toes.

Both methods are designed to allow the bandage to expand which will prevent circulatory constriction. It is recommended you start at the lower part of the limb and work up to the next joint for this reason too (e.g. from foot or wrist)

### First prepare your skin

Clean the area and apply your regular emollient and/or prescribed topical corticosteroid medication as instructed by your healthcare professional.

**Method 1: Pleating:** Our video about paste bandages shows how to use this method [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/dermatologyvideos](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/dermatologyvideos)

1. From the starting point, place the bandage on the skin on the front side of the limb and wrap the bandage around the back of the limb and return to the front once again (approximately one and half turns). (see figure 1)
2. The bandage should overlap the previous turn by approximately half the width of the bandage (50%)
3. Once the bandage is returned to the front of the limb the bandage should be doubled back on itself to form a pleat. (figure 1)
4. The bandage is then continued in the opposite direction around the back of the limb returning to the front of the limb (again approximately one and a half turns) (figure 2) Take care not to wrap tightly.
5. Each pleat you make will change the direction that the bandage has been applied. It is important that the folds are created at different places along the length of the limb to prevent a single pressure point or ridge.
6. This technique should be continued up the limb until you have reached the next joint.
7. For larger limbs sometimes two bandages will be required to cover the required area
8. Using your hands carefully smooth the bandage in a downwards stroke.
9. Cover the paste bandage with a soft viscose tubular bandage to prevent slippage and to protect your clothes and furnishings from soiling. (figure 3)
10. When you have finished applying the bandages check they are not too tight.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

**Method 2: Cutting and overlapping:** Our video about paste bandages shows how to use this method [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/dermatologyvideos](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/dermatologyvideos)

1. From the starting point, place the bandage on the skin on the front of the limb and wrap the bandage around the back of the limb and return to the front once again (approximately one and a half turns).
2. Then cut the bandage (rather than pleat). (See figure 4)
3. The application of small pieces of bandage is continued in this way until the treatment area is covered. (figure 5)
4. Each new bandage piece should overlap the previous applied section by approximately half the width of the bandage. (50%)



Figure 4



Figure 5

## How long should I keep them on for?

Paste bandages are for single use only. They should be changed every 24- 48 hours. Your healthcare professional will tell you how long to use them for. Usually short courses are recommended, for example up to four weeks. Some patients may be advised to only use them at night.

**Important:** If you think you are having a reaction to the medicated bandage (as described on page 1), or that it has become too tight, or you are getting pins and needles in your feet or hands, then you should remove the bandage immediately and ask a healthcare professional to review.

## How do I remove the bandage?

Pleated bandages should be removed with care to protect fragile skin. Soaking the bandage in water will help if the bandages have stuck to your skin. Pleated bandages are removed by unfolding the pleat.

## Alternative paste bandage

**Zipzoc® Stocking:** This is a tubular stocking impregnated with zinc oxide. Check with your healthcare professional if this is a suitable option for you.

This is easier to apply because it is put on like a sock and no pleating or cutting of the bandage is required. However this can only be used on limbs and is only available in one size which might not be suitable for everyone. Each Zipzoc is for single use only so cannot be reapplied. An over layer of viscose tubular bandage should also be used as a cover to protect clothing and furnishings (as described in item 9 on page 3). Zipzocs can remain in place for 24-72 hours at a time. To remove Zipzoc, carefully cut off and dispose of the stocking.

## Other tips

- Store paste bandages in the fridge if you like the sensation of cooling on the skin when applied.
- An ointment (such as White Soft Paraffin /Liquid Paraffin (50:50) can be applied on top of the paste bandage throughout the day to keep it moist and intact.

## Useful sources of information

Watch our video about how to apply occlusive dressings:

[www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/dermatologyvideos](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/dermatologyvideos)

**National Eczema Society:** Paste Bandages and Wet Wraps

w: [www.eczema.org](http://www.eczema.org)

**British Association of Dermatologists (BAD)**

w: [www.bad.org.uk](http://www.bad.org.uk)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns please speak to the nurse or doctor looking after you. You can contact the dermatology department on 020 7188 7847. If it is urgent, call the hospital switchboard on 020 7188 7188 and ask for the on-call dermatologist.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets).

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)      **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)      **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. **t:** 020 7188 8815      **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111 **w:** [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

## NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. **w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Was this leaflet useful?

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets), or **e:** [patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk)

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