

Uses for Epsom Salts

The best products for emergency preparedness are those that serve multiple functions both before and after a disruptive event. Epsom Salts satisfy that requirement and more. Low cost, natural and readily available, Epsom Salts can be dry-stored for long periods and require minimal effort and activation to do a number of things well.

First commercially obtained from mineral waters near Epsom, Surrey, England, Epsom Salts (Magnesium Sulfate) are water soluble crystals that have properties beneficial to humans, plants and animals. A natural exfoliate and anti-inflammation remedy that can be used to treat dry skin, sore muscles, small wounds and even treat minor conditions and illness. It can also be added to any bath or foot-soak to create a luxurious in-home spa experience.

Chemically, Epsom Salt readily exchanges sulfur for carbon when possible. Since the body takes in various forms of carbons in food and breathable air it becomes a repository of carbon that must be refreshed and cleansed. The magnesium connects with the carbon units facilitating excretion of waste products from the body's systems both internal and external. Plants lacking magnesium benefit in a similar fashion.

Ways to Use Epsom Salts

1. Relax Muscles

When it comes to relaxing muscles, Epsom Salts work best when dissolved in warm water. Mix 1½ cups of Epsom Salt in 4-6 cups of hot water. Add solution to warm bath for soaking. Soak for about 15-20 minutes. Good for body ache, detoxing and sleep induction as well. For sore feet, take 1 cup of Epsom Salts and add to a foot bath full of warm water. Soak for about 15-30 minutes.

2. Reduce Inflammation

To reduce inflammation in swollen or sore muscles, you can soak in an Epsom Salt bath, or simply use a moist compress over the affected muscles. To make an Epsom Salt compress, mix 2 cups of Epsom Salts in one gallon of warm water, and let it get cold. Soak a towel in the cold water, and then loosely wrap the region with the moist towel for 15 minutes.

3. Relieve Constipation

You need to be very careful when taking Epsom salts internally. That said, the magnesium in these salts is well known for relieving constipation. You can use Epsom salts in two ways to resolve this problem:

If you do not want to ingest Epsom Salts, try soaking in a mixture of warm water and Epsom salts. Use 5 cups of salt in the water instead of just 1 ½ cups as you would to relieve sore muscles.

When ingesting Epsom Salts to treat constipation, dissolve 2-4 level **teaspoons** in 8 ounces of water. If you are treating someone between the ages of 6 and 12, lower the Epsom Salt amount down to 1-2 level **teaspoons** in 8 ounces of water. If you do not have a bowel movement after 4 hours, you can try a second dose. Do not take more than two doses in a 24 hour period, and do not use Epsom Salts for more than 5 days.

4. Soothe Insect Bites

Epsom Salts can be used to relieve redness, itching, and irritation associated with mosquito and other insect bites. You can bathe in Epsom Salts as you would for relieving sore muscles, use a cold compress, or apply an Epsom Salt paste. To make the compress, dissolve 2 tablespoons of Epsom Salts in 1 cup of hot water, and allow to cool. Soak cotton pad and apply the compress to the insect bite once you clean and dry the area. Pour solution onto pad to refresh. You can also use these methods for poison ivy, poison oak, rashes, and sunburn.

5. Beach Wave Hair Spray

In tandem with a wet / dry shampoo, a spray made with Epsom Salts can help you cope when showers are infrequent (see Pirate Bath).

- **For Wet / Dry Shampoo** – combine 1 cup warm water, ¼ cup arrowroot (or corn starch) with ¼ cup vodka (or rubbing alcohol) in a spray bottle and shake very well. Apply at roots and brush dry.
- **For Hair Spray** – combine 1 cup warm water, 2 tablespoons Epsom Salts, 1 teaspoon Aloe Vera gel, 1 teaspoon natural conditioner (or a few drops of nut oil) with 1 teaspoon vodka (or tequila if you are feeling adventurous) in a spray bottle and shake well. Apply as normal and scrunch dry.

6. Garden Fertilizer

Plants need magnesium in order to remain healthy and carry out many functions necessary for life. Many soils and old garden plots do not have enough magnesium. Correct this problem by adding Epsom Salts at a rate of 1 cup per 100 feet when you turn the soil over prior to planting. You can also fertilize plants with Epsom Salts during the growing season by drenching them with a mixture of 1-2 teaspoons of Epsom Salt to 1 gallon of water. Pour the mixture at the base of the plant so that it goes straight to the roots. This is especially useful for tomatoes, and peppers which always need more magnesium. For these plants, apply the mixture every two weeks. You can also use Epsom Salts for roses. Instead of using a liquid mixture, apply one teaspoon of Epsom Salts per foot of plant growth to the soil, and then water the plants. Your lawn, fruit trees, and flower beds will also do better if you apply Epsom Salts to them.

7. Improve Seed Germination

Epsom Salts improve germination and seedlings tend to be much sturdier once they emerge. Aside from providing magnesium, the Epsom Salts also provide extra sulfur, which seedlings also tend to need in greater quantities as they emerge and start to grow. Add one tablespoon of Epsom Salt to a gallon of water. Use this mixture to water the seeds when you first plant them.

8. Reduce Transplant Shock

If you are planting new trees or bushes, soak the root ball in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of Epsom Salts to 1 gallon of water.

For moving plants from containers to soil, water them with 1 tablespoon of Epsom Salts to 1 gallon of water as soon as you are done planting them. This will ease shock to the roots and also improve the ability of the leaves to provide nutrients for the rest of the plant. You can also try adding one tablespoon of Epsom Salts to each hole, cover it with a thin layer of soil, and then place the new plant in the hole. As the plant grows, the roots will reach the Epsom Salts later in the growing season when they need it most.

9. Deter Raccoons

Epsom Salts can be used to keep raccoons away from the trash can and out of your garden. Simply sprinkle Epsom Salts around the area where you want to deter raccoons. Sprinkle more Epsom Salts after it rains because it is the smell and taste of the salts that repel the raccoons.

10. Easily Clean Pots and Pans

Epsom Salts can help with loosening grease and grime so that it is easier to clean heavily soiled pots and pans. Start off by mixing $\frac{1}{4}$ tablespoon of Epsom Salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ tablespoon of dish detergent in warm water. Let them sit and soak in the pot or pan that needs to be cleaned. When you are ready to start scrubbing, you can also add some Epsom Salt onto troublesome areas, as it will release the grime faster. If the pots or pans are not heavily covered in grime, grease, or burnt food, you can simply add the Epsom Salts directly to the soiled surface and scrub.

11. Splinter Removal

Make a strong solution of 1 cup warm water and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup Epsom Salts and let the splinter soak for about 10 minutes. This makes it so much easier to remove (and helps stop the pain too!).

12. Firming Facial Wash

Grind up Epsom Salts (using a mortar and pestle) and add it to a face wash or cleansing oil and massage it into your face.

13. Tile and Grout Cleaner

Add some Epsom Salts to some liquid dish soap and scrub away. Rinse well since the soap will be slippery!