



## PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET: sodium metabisulfite / sulfite

**Your patch test shows that you have a contact allergy to:** sodium metabisulfite (sulfite)

**Synonym(s):** Several salts of sulfite are in use, including *sodium* salts (sodium sulfite; sodium metabisulfite = sodium disulfite = sodium pyrosulfite), *potassium* salts (potassium sulfite, bisulfite, metabisulfite), *calcium* salts (calcium sulfite, bisulfite) and *ammonium* salts (ammonium sulfite, bisulfite).

**Definition:** Sulfite is an umbrella term for all chemicals containing a sulfite group ( $\text{SO}_3^{2-}$ ), the most well-known derivative being sodium metabisulfite ( $\text{Na}_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_5$ ).

### Use and occurrence:

Sulfites are used for their antioxidant and preservative properties and can be present in various product types. Sodium and potassium salts are used in food, drinks and cosmetics, whereas calcium salts are only used in food/drinks, and ammonium salts are only used in cosmetics. These chemicals can be difficult to avoid. Relevant product types include:

- pharmaceutical products such as creams (e.g., topical antifungal and corticosteroid creams), solutions, injections (e.g., local anesthetics containing adrenaline)
- medical devices (e.g., lubricants), sometimes unlabeled
- cosmetics such as shampoos, hair dyes, permanent solutions, false tan lotions
- other domestically used products (e.g., detergents)
- photographic developers and fixatives
- bleaching agents for textiles (wool, silk, etc.)
- in products to remove stains from textiles and paper
- as reducing agents in the manufacture of dyes
- in the glass industry
- as preservatives in food (e.g., dried fruits, seafood, meat) and beverages (e.g., beer, wine, soft drinks): E220 to E228, E150b+d
- in rubber manufacture of natural (latex) and synthetic rubber products
- in leather (tanning), textiles (bleaching) and laundries
- in pulp and paper industries
- in water and sewage treatments, including treatments for swimming pools and spas
- as antiseptic in fermentation
- in various other technical and industrial products

*Disclaimer: Always check your products as these lists can never be complete and ingredients change.*