



# Tap water no danger to wounds

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TAP water is fine for cleansing wounds, according to a new Cochrane review.

Eight trials comparing tap water with saline or with pro-caine spirit were included in the review, which found little overall difference in the rate of subsequent infection between those using the different methods (*Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2008, online 23 January).

Where tap water is potable, it may be as effective as sterile solutions

In fact, in two of these trials, patients with acute lacerations who cleansed their wounds by showering had significantly reduced rates of infection compared to those who cleansed with saline.

Another three trials, which compared the use of tap water cleansing with no cleansing, failed to find a benefit in infection or healing rates.

However, the reviewers said the findings should be interpreted with caution, as some trials did not report methodology in sufficient detail to enable assessment of their quality.

They concluded that in countries where tap water was potable, it may be as effective as sterile solutions, with the additional benefit of likely cost savings.

In other new Cochrane findings:

- Cranberry juice or capsules may reduce the incidence of recurrent urinary tract infection in women but not in people who need catheterisation. However, the optimum dosage was unclear, and many people assigned to drinking the juice dropped out of trials, reviewers said.
- Antioxidants – specifically vitamins C and E – appeared to provide no benefit in preventing pre-eclampsia, according to reviewers who looked at 10 trials involv-

ing more than 6500 women. Vitamin supplements could not be recommended for this purpose, said lead author Dr Alice Rumbold from the

Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin.

- Anti-depressants were no more effective than placebo in management of patients with chronic low back pain, neither relieving the pain nor assisting with depression, while at the same time causing side-effects. However, patients with significant clinical depression should not avoid anti-depressants

based on these findings, the researchers said.

- NSAIDs are no more effective than paracetamol for acute low back pain, according to “moderate” evidence. A review of 65 trials, suggested NSAIDs were slightly better than placebo in patients with acute or chronic low back pain, except for those with sciatica where no difference in effect was found. 

