

bubble bath

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Bubble Bath

A high-foaming surfactant product poured under running water. Bubble bath is the only product in this catalogue with **its own dedicated warning statement written into US regulation** — 21 CFR 740.17 — and the reason for that regulation is the most useful thing on this page.

The mandatory warning

Bubble bath products marketed in the US must bear a warning, and the regulation prescribes wording to this effect:

Caution — Use only as directed. Excessive use or prolonged exposure may cause irritation to skin and urinary tract. Discontinue use if rash, redness, or itching occurs. Consult your physician if irritation persists. Keep out of reach of children.

Where the label bears directions preventing excessive use, the "Keep out of reach of children" line may be replaced with wording directing that the product be kept out of reach except under adult supervision.

Why it exists

Bubble bath is, chemically, a **concentrated surfactant solution that the user then sits in for twenty minutes**. Every other surfactant product is applied and rinsed within seconds. That difference is the whole issue.

The specific harms the rule addresses:

- **Urinary tract irritation**, particularly in children and particularly in girls, where surfactant contact with the urethral opening over a prolonged soak causes irritation that presents like a urinary tract infection. This is a recognised paediatric presentation and it is the main reason the warning was written.
- **Vulvovaginal irritation** in children and adults.
- **Skin barrier stripping** from prolonged surfactant immersion, which is why bubble baths are poor for eczema-prone skin.

The mitigations follow directly: **short baths, dilute solution, rinse afterwards with clean water, and do not use bubble bath routinely for young children** — plain water, or a dispersible [Bath Oil](#), is a better default.

What is in it

Class	Doing what	Names
Primary surfactant	Foam and cleaning	Sodium laureth sulfate, sodium lauryl sulfate
Foam booster / stabiliser	Long-lasting bubbles	Cocamidopropyl betaine, cocamide DEA/MEA, lauryl glucoside
Thickener	Pour and body	Sodium chloride, PEG-150 distearate
Emollient	Softens the strip	Glycerin, oils — though these kill foam , which is the formulator's dilemma
Preservative	Essential	Sodium benzoate, phenoxyethanol
Fragrance and colour	The product's appeal	Parfum, approved colour additives

Foam and emollience are in direct opposition. Oils destabilise bubbles, so a high-foaming bubble bath is necessarily low in emollients. A "moisturising bubble bath" is a compromise on both.

Where it sits in the rules

Cosmetic in the US — FDA primary category **(02) bath preparations** — with the **mandatory warning statement at 21 CFR 740.17**, which sits alongside 740.10 (safety not determined), 740.11 (aerosols), 740.12 (feminine deodorant sprays), 740.18 (coal-tar hair dyes) and 740.19 (suntanning without sunscreen) as one of the handful of cosmetic warnings the US mandates by name.

Colour additives must be approved for the intended use and certified colours must come from **FDA-certified batches**.

In the EU, preservatives come from the **Annex V closed positive list**, **methylisothiazolinone is capped at 15 ppm in rinse-off**, and named fragrance allergens must be declared above 0.01% in rinse-off — a list substantially expanded by Regulation (EU) 2023/1545. Children's cosmetics require specific attention in the safety assessment.

Shelf life

Two to three years unopened; 12–18 months after opening. High-surfactant products are robust.

The failure modes are thinning, cloudiness and — the common one — **topping the bottle up with water**, which both kills the foam and contaminates the remainder.

Related

- [Bath and Body](#) — the shelf this sits on, and the rest of it.
- [Cosmetics](#) — what the label is legally allowed to say, and the full catalogue.
- The rest of *Soaking* — [Bath Oil](#) · [Bath Salts](#) · [Bath Bomb](#) · [Bath Capsule](#) · [Bath Milk](#) · [Shower Steamer](#).
- [Baby Bubble Bath](#) — where this warning matters most.
- Regulatory statements here follow the FDA and EU sources listed on [Cosmetics](#), read 16 August 2026.