

HANDBOOK OF  
PHARMACEUTICAL

EXCIPIENTS

THIRD EDITION



**APhA**  
American  
Pharmaceutical  
Association



Pharmaceutical Press

EDITED BY

ARTHUR H. KIBBE

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# Handbook of PHARMACEUTICAL EXCIPIENTS

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Third Edition

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American Pharmaceutical Association  
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London, United Kingdom

Published by the American Pharmaceutical Association  
2215 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20037-2985, USA  
www.aphanet.org  
and the Pharmaceutical Press  
1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN, UK  
www.pharmpress.com

© 1986, 1994, 2000 American Pharmaceutical Association and Pharmaceutical Press

First edition 1986  
Second edition 1994  
Third edition 2000

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 0-85369-381-1 (UK)  
ISBN: 0-917330-96-X (USA)

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Handbook of pharmaceutical excipients / edited by Arthur H. Kibbe.--3rd ed.  
p. ; cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-917330-96-X

I. Excipients--Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Kibbe, Arthur H. II. American  
Pharmaceutical Association.

[DNLM: 1. Excipients--Handbooks. QV 735 H236 2000]

RS201.E87 H36 2000

615'.19--dc21

99-044554

**A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.**

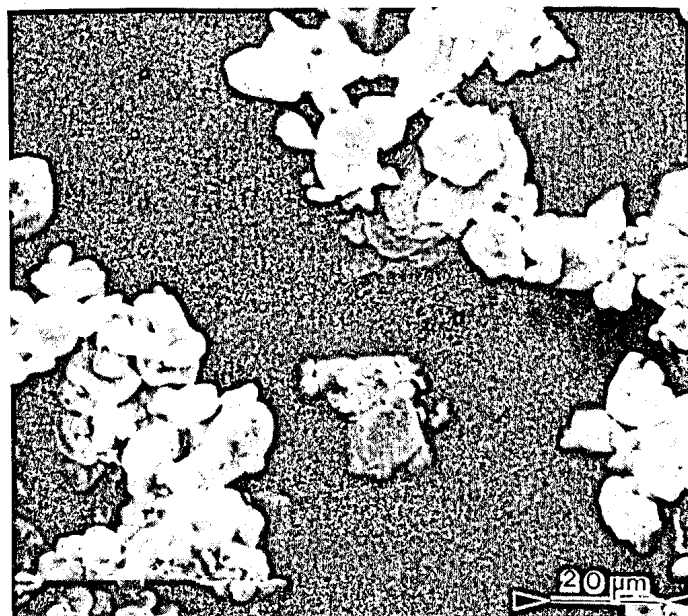
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# Methylparaben

## SEM: 1

Excipient: Methylparaben  
Supplier: Bate Chemical Co Ltd  
Magnification: 600×



Methylparaben (0.18%) together with propylparaben (0.02%) has been used for the preservation of various parenteral pharmaceutical formulations, *see* Section 14.

Use	Concentration (%)
IM, IV, SC injections <sup>(a)</sup>	0.065-0.25
Inhalation solutions	0.025-0.07
Intradermal injections	0.10
Nasal solutions	0.033
Ophthalmic preparations <sup>(a)</sup>	0.015-0.2
Oral solutions and suspensions	0.015-0.2
Rectal preparations	0.1-0.18
Topical preparations	0.02-0.3
Vaginal preparations	0.1-0.18

<sup>(a)</sup> *See* Section 14.

## 1. Nonproprietary Names

BP: Methyl hydroxybenzoate  
JP: Methyl parahydroxybenzoate  
PhEur: Methylis parahydroxybenzoas  
USP: Methylparaben

## 2. Synonyms

E218; 4-hydroxybenzoic acid methyl ester; *Methyl Chemosept*; methyl *p*-hydroxybenzoate; *Methyl Parasept*; *Nipagin M*; *Solbrol M*; *Tegosept M*.

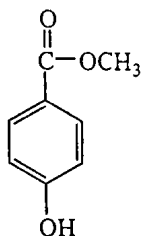
## 3. Chemical Name and CAS Registry Number

Methyl 4-hydroxybenzoate [99-76-3]

## 4. Empirical Formula Molecular Weight

C<sub>8</sub>H<sub>8</sub>O<sub>3</sub> 152.15

## 5. Structural Formula



## 6. Functional Category

Antimicrobial preservative.

## 7. Applications in Pharmaceutical Formulation or Technology

Methylparaben is widely used as an antimicrobial preservative in cosmetics, food products, and pharmaceutical formulations. It may be used either alone, in combination with other parabens, or with other antimicrobial agents. In cosmetics, methylparaben is the most frequently used antimicrobial preservative.<sup>(1)</sup>

The parabens are effective over a wide pH range and have a broad spectrum of antimicrobial activity although they are most effective against yeasts and molds. Antimicrobial activity increases as the chain length of the alkyl moiety is increased; aqueous solubility however decreases. A mixture of parabens is thus frequently used to provide effective preservation. Preservative efficacy is also improved by the addition of 2-5% propylene glycol, or by using parabens in combination with other antimicrobial agents such as imidurea, *see* Section 10.

## 8. Description

Methylparaben occurs as colorless crystals or a white crystalline powder. It is odorless or almost odorless and has a slight burning taste.

## 9. Pharmacopeial Specifications

Test	JP	PhEur	USP
Identification	+	+	+
Characters	+	+	—
Melting range	125-128°C	125-128°C	125-128°C
Acidity	—	+	+
Loss on drying	≤ 0.5%	—	≤ 0.5%
Residue on ignition	≤ 0.10%	—	≤ 0.05%

(Continued)

Test	JP	PhEur	USP
Sulfate	≤ 0.024%	—	—
Heavy metals	≤ 20 ppm	—	—
Readily carbonizable substances	+	—	—
Appearance of solution	—	+	+
Related substances	+	+	—
Assay (dried basis)	≥ 99.0%	99.0-100.5%	99.0-100.5%

## 10. Typical Properties

**Antimicrobial activity:** methylparaben exhibits antimicrobial activity between pH 4-8. Preservative efficacy decreases with increasing pH due to the formation of the phenolate anion. Parabens are more active against yeasts and molds than against bacteria. They are also more active against Gram-positive bacteria than against Gram-negative bacteria.

Methylparaben is the least active of the parabens; antimicrobial activity increases with increasing chain length of the alkyl moiety. Activity may be improved by using combinations of parabens, since additive effects occur. Therefore, combinations of methyl, ethyl, propyl, and butylparaben are often used together. Activity has also been reported to be enhanced by the addition of other excipients such as: propylene glycol (2-5%);<sup>(2)</sup> phenylethyl alcohol;<sup>(3)</sup> and edetic acid.<sup>(4)</sup> Activity may also be enhanced, due to synergistic effects, by using combinations of parabens with other antimicrobial preservatives such as imidurea.<sup>(5)</sup>

The hydrolysis product, *p*-hydroxybenzoic acid, has practically no antimicrobial activity.

See also Section 12.

Reported minimum inhibitory concentrations (MICs) for methylparaben are shown in Table I.<sup>(4)</sup>

**Density (true):** 1.352 g/cm<sup>3(a)</sup>

**Dissociation constant:** pK<sub>a</sub> = 8.4 at 22°C

**Melting point:** 125-128°C

**Partition coefficients:** values for different vegetable oils vary considerably and are affected by the purity of the oil, see Table II.

**Solubility:** see Table III

<sup>(a)</sup> Results of laboratory project for third edition.

## 11. Stability and Storage Conditions

Aqueous solutions of methylparaben, at pH 3-6, may be sterilized by autoclaving at 120°C for 20 minutes, without decomposition.<sup>(8)</sup> Aqueous solutions at pH 3-6 are stable (less than 10% decomposition) for up to about 4 years at room temperature, while aqueous solutions at pH 8 or above are subject to rapid hydrolysis (10% or more after about 60 days storage at room temperature).<sup>(9)</sup>

Predicted rate constants and half-lives at 25°C, for methylparaben dissolved in dilute hydrochloric acid solution at the initial pH shown below:<sup>(9)</sup>

Initial pH of solution	Rate constant k ± σ <sup>(a)</sup> (hour <sup>-1</sup> )	Half-life t <sub>1/2</sub> ± σ <sup>(a)</sup> (day)
1	(1.086 ± 0.005) × 10 <sup>-4</sup>	266 ± 13
2	(1.16 ± 0.12) × 10 <sup>-5</sup>	2490 ± 260
3	(6.1 ± 1.5) × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	47000 ± 12000

**Table I: Minimum inhibitory concentrations (MICs) of methylparaben in aqueous solution.<sup>(4)</sup>**

Microorganism	MIC (μg/mL)
<i>Aerobacter aerogenes</i> ATCC 8308	2000
<i>Aspergillus oryzae</i>	600
<i>Aspergillus niger</i> ATCC 9642	1000
<i>Aspergillus niger</i> ATCC 10254	1000
<i>Bacillus cereus</i> var. <i>mycoides</i> ATCC 6462	2000
<i>Bacillus subtilis</i> ATCC 6633	2000
<i>Candida albicans</i> ATCC 10231	2000
<i>Enterobacter cloacae</i> ATCC 23355	1000
<i>Escherichia coli</i> ATCC 8739	1000
<i>Escherichia coli</i> ATCC 9637	1000
<i>Klebsiella pneumoniae</i> ATCC 8308	1000
<i>Penicillium chrysogenum</i> ATCC 9480	500
<i>Penicillium digitatum</i> ATCC 10030	500
<i>Proteus vulgaris</i> ATCC 8427	2000
<i>Proteus vulgaris</i> ATCC 13315	1000
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> ATCC 9027	4000
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> ATCC 15442	4000
<i>Pseudomonas stutzeri</i>	2000
<i>Rhizopus nigricans</i> ATCC 6227A	500
<i>Saccharomyces cerevisiae</i> ATCC 9763	1000
<i>Salmonella typhosa</i> ATCC 6539	1000
<i>Sarcina lutea</i>	4000
<i>Serratia marcescens</i> ATCC 8100	1000
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> ATCC 6538P	2000
<i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i> ATCC 12228	2000
<i>Trichoderma lignorum</i> ATCC 8678	250
<i>Trichoderma mentagrophytes</i>	250

**Table II: Partition coefficients of methylparaben in vegetable oil and water.<sup>(6,7)</sup>**

Solvent	Partition coefficient Oil: water
Almond oil	7.5
Castor oil	6.0
Corn oil	4.1
Diethyl adipate	200
Isopropyl myristate	18.0
Lanolin	7.0
Mineral oil	0.1
Peanut oil	4.2
Soybean oil	6.1

**Table III: Solubility of methylparaben in various solvents.<sup>(4)</sup>**

Solvent	Solubility at 25°C Unless otherwise stated
Ethanol	1 in 2
Ethanol (95%)	1 in 3
Ethanol (50%)	1 in 6
Ether	1 in 10
Glycerin	1 in 60
Mineral oil	Practically insoluble
Peanut oil	1 in 200
Propylene glycol	1 in 5
Water	1 in 400

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