



EN

EUROPEAN QUALIFYING EXAMINATION 2026

PAPER M1

Part 2

This paper contains :

- * Application 2026/M1/EN/1-4
- * Client letter 2026/M1/EN/5-6

Application as originally filed on 28 August 2025. No priority claimed.

Description

5 The present invention relates to hydrocolloid plasters.

Blisters can develop on the skin due to friction, for example when shoes rub on parts of the foot when running or walking. Hydrocolloid plasters can be used to aid the healing of blisters and prevent infection.

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When applied, the hydrocolloid plaster absorbs the fluid inside the blister. It also seals the blister, forming a protective barrier and keeping the wound clean.

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The plaster may be shaped for better adhesion to a part of the body, for example to fit on the heel, toes or sole of the foot.

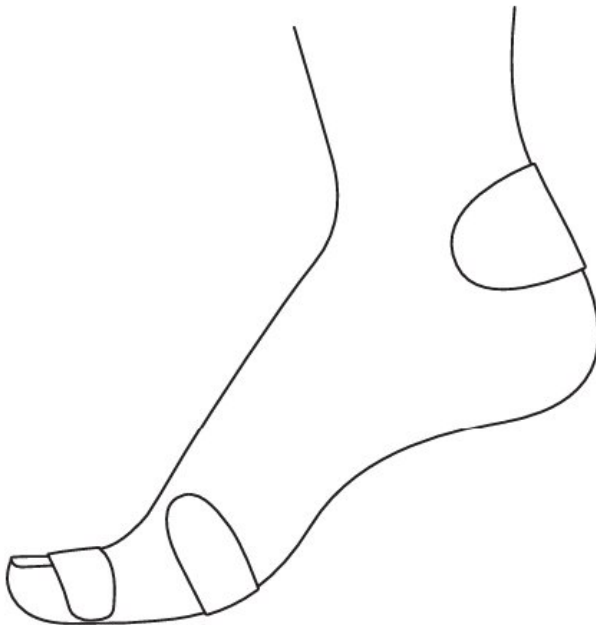


Figure 1: hydrocolloid plasters on a foot

The term “plaster” is used herein to describe an adhesive, protective covering (such as a sticker or patch) that is applied to skin and can be used as a dressing to treat wounds or skin conditions such as blisters, minor burns, corns, calluses, or acne.

- 5 The plaster comprises a carrier film. The carrier film forms a seal that keeps the wound clean and free of infection.

- The plaster further comprises a hydrocolloid layer on the carrier film. The term “hydrocolloid” refers to a material that forms a gel when it mixes with water. The
10 resulting gel creates a moist environment that supports healing. The hydrocolloid layer adheres firmly to the skin without the need for additional adhesive.

The hydrocolloid is typically CMC (carboxymethyl cellulose).

- 15 In some embodiments, the hydrocolloid layer comprises pectin. When pectin is used in the hydrocolloid layer, it provides structural support for cell and tissue regrowth and therefore speeds up wound healing time. In a preferred embodiment, the hydrocolloid layer comprises CMC and at least 10% weight/weight (w/w) pectin.

- 20 The hydrocolloid layer may further contain an antibacterial agent. Surprisingly, we have found that addition of salicylic acid to the hydrocolloid layer reduces the likelihood of bacterial infection. Accordingly, in one embodiment of the invention the hydrocolloid layer comprises from 0.5 to 1.5% (w/w) salicylic acid.

Claims

1. A hydrocolloid plaster comprising:
 - a carrier film; and
 - 5 - a hydrocolloid layer on the carrier film.
2. A hydrocolloid plaster according to claim 1, wherein the hydrocolloid layer comprises CMC.
3. A hydrocolloid plaster according to any previous claim, wherein the hydrocolloid layer comprises from 0.5% to 1.5% (w/w) salicylic acid.

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Extended European search report (EESR) issued by the EPO

1. The examination is based on the application as originally filed.
2. Documents D1, D2 and D3 are prior art in accordance with Article 54(2) EPC.
- 15 3. The subject-matter of claims 1 to 3 is not novel within the meaning of Articles 54(1) and (2) EPC because it is known from D1. D1 discloses hydrocolloid patches comprising a carrier film and a hydrocolloid layer made from CMC. D1 also teaches that the hydrocolloid contains 1% (w/w) salicylic acid, which falls within the claimed range of from 0.5 to 1.5%.
- 20 4. It is noted that D2 discloses corn removal plasters which contain salicylic acid and a hydrocolloid. It is further noted that D3 relates to pectin.
5. To maintain the application, new claims should be filed which take the above objections into account. Care should be taken to ensure that the new claims comply with the requirements of the EPC in respect of clarity, novelty and
- 25 inventive step (Articles 84, 54 and 56 EPC).
6. Any amendments should not introduce subject-matter which extends beyond the content of the application as originally filed (Article 123(2) EPC).

Prior art

D1 – product information for SILLYSALLY® pimple patches (published 10 March 2023)

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Our best-selling hydrocolloid pimple patches form a protective seal over spots and visibly improve their appearance. A hydrocolloid is a substance used in surgical dressings that's clinically proven to help heal spots by absorbing bacteria and fluid. Strong but gentle adhesion means that our patches remain sealed to your skin, wherever you apply them. Our patches are infused with antibacterial salicylic acid in the hydrocolloid layer to instantly target your blemishes and emerging spots. Ingredients: carrier film, CMC and 1% (w/w) salicylic acid.

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D2 – extract from a textbook (published 20 August 2005)

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Originally derived from the willow tree, salicylic acid is the starting material for the manufacture of aspirin. Salicylic acid can also be used to break down skin cells. This makes it an effective treatment for corns and calluses, where a small area of skin has become thickened due to pressure, often on toes or the sole of the foot. Corn removal plasters usually contain from 0.5 to 1.5% (w/w) salicylic acid together with a hydrocolloid, which provides protection from rubbing and pressure.

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D3 – extract from a recipe book (published 6 November 1984)

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Pectin is a natural gelling agent found in ripe fruit and is an important ingredient in making jams and jellies. It is easy to buy in the form of a liquid extract or powder. Pectin forms a gel when it mixes with water. You can make jam very easily by mixing fruit with water, sugar and pectin and boiling until it sets. To test whether the jam is set, place a spoonful on a plate or on a piece of cling film, and leave to cool for a few minutes before touching its surface. If wrinkles appear on the surface, the jam has reached setting point.

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Dear Ms Walker,

We have reviewed the EPO communication you sent us and have provided some comments below to help you respond.

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We understand that the examiner believes that claims 1-3 lack novelty over D1 and suggests that D2 might also be relevant. We are not sure this is correct as D1 relates to pimple patches and D2 refers only to corn removal plasters, whereas our patent application is all about blister plasters. D3 does not seem relevant in any way as it only discusses jam!

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Please prepare a new set of claims to give us the best protection for our business. We are currently exploring how to expand our product line beyond blister plasters, as we believe our technology is also relevant to other markets such as hydrocolloid wound dressings. We would like to cover these other uses as far as possible.

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Our main competitor has recently started selling a new type of hydrocolloid plaster. We can see from the product information leaflet that it is exactly the same as ours, except that the hydrocolloid layer contains only gelatine. In case you do not know, gelatine is a hydrocolloid derived from animal collagen. The product development team have asked me if we can file a patent application to protect the gelatine-only hydrocolloid plasters.

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Please provide me with your proposed response today, including the following:

1. A new set of three claims (maximum) based on the claims above and fulfilling all requirements of the EPC. **(6 points)**
- 5 2. Indicate the basis in the application as originally filed for the amendments (Article 123(2) EPC), following the standards set out in the Guidelines for Examination in the European Patent Office, Part H. **(4 points)**
- 10 3. Explain why the amended claims are novel over documents D1, D2 and D3, following the standards set out in the Guidelines for Examination in the European Patent Office, Part G-VI. **(10 points)**
- 15 4. Identify the closest prior art document, with a brief justification of your choice, and provide a summary of your arguments for inventive step starting from this document using the problem-solution approach as set out in the Guidelines for Examination in the European Patent Office, Part G-VII. **(20 points)**

Our policy is to file an amended description only when the examiner has agreed to the claims, so do **not** send an amended description with your response.

20 **Please can you also advise us on the following points:**

5. We understand that this application only covers blister plasters. Is it possible to amend the claims to also cover other types of hydrocolloid wound dressings, or will we need to file a divisional application to do this? **(4 points)**
- 25 6. Can we add claims to this application covering hydrocolloid plasters made from gelatine, or should we file a new patent application on this subject-matter? **(6 points)**

Kind regards,

30 Miles Trotter