

As specialists in leech biology we have prepared the following to help those of you directly involved in caring for the medicinal leech *Hirudo medicinalis*.

The two most important things to avoid are heat and chlorinated tap water. Leeches can live for months on a blood meal so feeding is unnecessary.

Temperature

The leeches will survive quite happily in a refrigerator or in a cool place, provided the temperature does not exceed 25C. Special care and attention should be taken to avoid sudden temperature changes. Keep them as cool as possible until they are needed. Never put leeches into direct sunlight.

Water

For best results we would recommend using bottled (still) spring or mineral water (preferably the Welsh type!) or alternatively de-chlorinated tap water can be used. When changing the water please ensure that the replacement water is the same temperature as the original.

Container

A lid is essential. Leeches are amphibious and like to crawl about. Perforations are advised but they must be very small indeed, as the leech body is elastic and capable of going through remarkably small openings. A jam jar with cloth cover secured tightly with string, rubber band or alternatively our containers (5020F) would be advisable. Do not overcrowd, the greater the amount of water, the less it needs changing. For best results we would recommend no more than two leeches per 250ml container but if you have the space to store them individually all the better.

Useful Biopharm Products:

Hirudo Gel (product code 045F)

Hirudogel is a revolutionary material for keeping leeches healthy. Hirudogel dispenses with the need for frequent water changes by keeping the leeches in a clean well oxygenated but moist matrix. This product is recommended for transporting leeches.

Container 5020F (product code 502F)

We now despatch our leeches in new plastic containers with Hirudo gel™. This will allow for short-term (up to 2 days) storage in a refrigerator when they arrive. This container is ideally suited for use with our Hirudo Mix/Gel products for transport and also for longer term storage of small numbers of leeches. Additional containers are available at a small cost.

Specification 5020F

Capacity: 250mls Hirudogel Storage: 2 large Leeches (Max) Transport: 6 large leeches

Maintenance Regime:

Check leeches upon arrival. For long-term storage check leeches regularly, rinse or replace Hirudogel when required.