Carbolic Soap

Carbolic soap is a mild disinfectant soap which contains carbolic acid, an compound extracted from coal tar. This soap was once the disinfectant of choice from operating rooms to private homes, and it can still be found in some regions of the world in drugstores. Several companies continue to manufacture carbolic soap as a reasonably cheap disinfectant, and some people like to use the soap out of a sense of nostalgia or a genuine liking for it.

One of the distinctive features of carbolic soap is its pink to red color, which is caused by the carbolic acid. Carbolic acid is actually used in a range of products, and in pure form, it can be a mild irritant. People who use a great deal of carbolic soap may find that their skin becomes irritated as a result of the prolonged contact; this is one of the reasons that carbolic soap was displaced in hospitals by more effective, gentle disinfectants.

As far as disinfectants go, carbolic soap is a reasonably good choice, especially when your options are limited. It can be used to wash hands between patients in a clinic, for example, and also as a regular showering soap, although you may want to keep it away from the sensitive skin around your face. Some people also find that the soap is effective against stubborn grease and embedded dirt, making carbolic soap popular with mechanics especially.

The scent of carbolic soap is quite distinctive. Many people say that it reminds them of leather, and people who have been using the soap for years may find the smell quite nostalgic. The smell is also a feature in many medical memoirs, with authors remembering the smell of carbolic soap in operating theatres and hospitals. Carbolic soap can also be used to do laundry and scrub floors, and a few companies sell versions formulated for these tougher tasks.

One place where carbolic soap continues to be popular and manufactured and readily available is the Caribbean, especially in places like Jamaica where it can be found in most drug stores and supermarkets.