

Emollient Patient Information Leaflet

This emollient is available to buy without a prescription at your local community pharmacy:

EMOLLIENTS:

NHS England recommend that patients with mild dry skin should generally be treated using a purchased over the counter product¹.

BATH & SHOWER EMOLLIENTS:

The recent BATHE trial found that emollient bath additives provided no additional benefit when added to standard eczema care. Patients are advised to wash with their normal emollients as a soap substitute or consider buying over the counter bath and shower emollients².

What are emollients?

Emollients replace the natural oils that help keep water in our skin to prevent it from becoming dry, cracked, rough, scaly, and itchy.

Are there any possible side-effects from emollients?

Prescription emollients tend to be non-perfumed. However, some creams contain preservatives, fragrances, and other additives. Some people become sensitised (allergic) to an ingredient. This can make the skin inflammation worse rather than better. If you suspect that you are sensitive to a product then see your doctor for advice.

Note: ointments tend to cause fewer problems with skin sensitivity as these usually do not contain preservatives³.



How to apply emollients³

- ✓ Wash hands and apply a thin layer in smooth downward strokes in the direction of hair growth.
- ✓ Apply as often as needed to keep the skin supple and moist, usually at least three to four times a day. Some people may need to increase this to up to every hour if the skin is very dry.
- ✓ Usually ointments need to be applied less often than creams or lotions for the same effect.
- ✓ Apply after washing to trap moisture in the skin.
- ✓ Avoid massaging in or applying too thickly as this can block hair follicles, trap heat, and cause itching.
- ✓ Emollients can be applied before or after any other treatments e.g. steroid creams, but it is important to leave at least 30 minutes before applying the next treatment.
- ✓ Don't stop using your emollient if your skin looks better as skin can flare up again quickly.

Bathing and washing³

- ✓ Avoid bubble baths and soaps as they can be irritating and dry the skin.
- ✓ Use an emollient as a soap substitute. Apply prior to washing and directly afterwards onto damp skin.
- ✓ Alternatively, 1-2 tablespoons of any ointment (**except those labelled as a 50/50 mix**) can be dissolved in hot water and added into bath water.
- ✓ When drying, do not rub with a towel but pat the skin dry to avoid damage to the skin.
- ✓ **Take care when entering the bath/shower after applying emollients as they make surfaces slippery.**

 **WARNING:** Please keep **all emollients** away from fire, flames, and cigarettes - dressings and clothing soaked with an emollient can be ignited easily⁴.

References:

1. Items which should not be routinely prescribed in primary care, NHS England Gateway Publication 07448.
2. BATHE, BMJ, 2018.
3. Emollients factsheet, National Eczema Society, 2018.
4. MHRA, Fire risk, Dec 2018.