

EMOLLIENTS:

NHS England¹ recommends that GPs do not routinely prescribe products for mild dry skin and that patients should purchase products over the counter.¹

BATH & SHOWER EMOLLIENTS:

NHS England² recommends that GPs stop prescribing BATH and SHOWER emollients and ask patient to wash with their normal emollients as a soap substitute or consider buying over the counter bath and shower emollients. Recent research³ found that emollient bath additives provided no additional benefit when added to standard eczema care. This recommendation has been incorporated into the North West London (NWL) emollient guide for dermatological skin conditions⁴.

What are emollients? ^(4,5)

Emollients are moisturising treatments applied directly to the skin to soothe and hydrate it. They cover the skin with a protective film to trap in moisture and replace the natural oils that help keep water in your skin to prevent it from becoming dry, cracked, rough, scaly, and itchy.

Which emollient to use?

There is a wide range of emollients available such as creams, gels, ointments and lotions. You may need to try more than one emollient before you find the one that suits you best.

What are the different types of emollients available? ^(5,6)

- **Creams** are emulsions of oil and water and are generally well absorbed into the skin. They are good for daytime use as they are not very greasy, easy to apply and are absorbed quickly.
- **Gels** consist of active ingredients in suitable water or oil bases; they generally have a high water content and are particularly suitable for application to the face and scalp.
- **Ointments** are greasy thick preparations which are normally insoluble in water but very moisturising. They are good for very dry, thickened skin and night-time use.
- **Lotions** have a cooling effect. They are good for hairy or damaged areas of skin (such as weeping eczema) as they're thin and spread easily, but aren't very moisturising.

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 preservatives.⁷

WARNING - Please keep **all emollients away from fire**, flames, and cigarettes - dressings and clothing soaked with an emollient can be ignited easily⁸.

How to apply emollients⁷

- 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 washing⁷

- 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 labeled 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.**

References:

1. NHS England "Guidance on conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care". <https://www.england.nhs.uk/medicines-2/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed/>
2. NHS England guidance Items which should not be routinely prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/items-which-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/>
3. BATHE, BMJ, 2018.
4. North West London Collaborations of Clinical Commissioning Groups "Emollient Guidance and Patient Information Leaflet". <https://www.hounslowccg.nhs.uk/newspublications/publications.aspx?n=8497>
5. NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/emollients/>
6. BNF- Skin conditions and management section <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summary/skin-conditions-management.html>
7. Emollients factsheet, National Eczema Society, 2018. 8. MHRA, Fire risk, Dec 2018

Emollient Patient Information

PRODUCT	Pack sizes
CREAMS & GELS (Moderate dry skin)	
AproDerm® Emollient Cream ^{SS}	45g, 50g, 450, 500g
Aproderm® Gel (Alternative to DOUBLEBASE GEL)	100g, 500g
Aquamax® Cream ^{SS}	30g, 100g, 500g
Cetomacrogol Formula A Cream	500g
Epimax® ExCetra Cream ^{SS} (Alternative to CETRABEN CREAM)	100g, 500g
Epimax® Isomol Gel ^{SS} (Alternative to DOUBLEBASE GEL)	100g, 500g
Epimax® Oatmeal Cream ^{SS} (Alternative to AVEENO CREAM)	100g, 500g
Epimax® Original Cream® ^{SS} (Alternative to DIPROBASE CREAM)	100g, 500g
ZeroAQS® Emollient Cream ^{SS} (Alternative to AQUEOUS CREAM SLS Free)	500g
Zerocream® (Alternative to E45 CREAM)	50g, 500g
OINTMENTS (Severe dry skin)	
AproDerm® Ointment	50g, 500g
Epimax® Ointment ^{SS}	125g, 500g
Epimax® Paraffin-Free Ointment ^{SS}	500g
Fifty:50 Ointment	250g, 500g
Hydromol® Ointment ^{SS} (Alternative to EPADERM OINTMENT)	100g, 125g, 500g, 1000g
Zeroderm® Ointment ^{SS}	125g, 500g
UREA CONTAINING CREAMS (Dry, scaling skin conditions)	
Balneum Plus® Cream	100g, 500g
Dermatonics® Once Heel Balm	75ml, 200ml
Hydromol® Intensive Cream	30g, 100g
ImuDERM® Emollient	500g
ANTIMICROBIAL CONTAINING EMOLLIENT - AVOID unless infection is present	
Dermol® 500 Lotion	500ml
Dermol® Cream	100g, 500g

Please note:

- **SS** stands for emollients that can be used as a **Soap Substitute**.

- This table presents the North West London recommended emollients in their relevant sections alphabetically.

- Please ask your pharmacist/retailer for further information on the available product **pack sizes and prices** as they may vary.

TREATMENT PLAN

Product Name:

Dose instructions: