

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG does not support the prescribing of medications that are available to buy from local pharmacies or supermarkets for children or adults with common illnesses and minor short-term ailments.

The medicines listed below should be purchased:

- ◆ moisturising creams, gels, ointments and balms for dry skin
- ◆ bath oils and shower gel (unless recommended by a specialist for infected eczema).

The NHS belongs to everybody and the CCG must ensure that its resources are used in the best possible way for all patients.

NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough CCG
Patient Experience Team
Lockton House
Clarendon Road
Cambridge
CB2 8FH
Phone: 01223 725400
E-mail: CAPCCG.PET@nhs.net

Dry Skin Information Leaflet





What is dry skin?

Dry skin is a very common condition which can appear at any age. It usually doesn't present a serious problem but can often be associated with other medical conditions such as eczema, contact dermatitis, and psoriasis.

What causes dry skin?

The skin is made up of many different layers and it forms a natural barrier to protect our body from the outside environment. To help protect the outer layer of skin from losing water, the skin produces an oily substance called sebum. If the skin doesn't have enough sebum, it loses water and feels dry.

Common causes of dry skin :

- ◆ Excessive bathing or
- ◆ showering, scrubbing of the skin while washing, or harsh soaps that dissolve the protective layer of sebum.
- ◆ Environmental conditions that increase water loss, such as very hot, dry weather or central heating. Frequent exposure to wind and sun can evaporate water from the skin, making the surface feel itchy and dry.
- ◆ Decreased production of sebum. This is often a factor in the elderly.

What can you do to help prevent and treat dry skin?

There are lifestyle changes that can be made which can help to treat and prevent future outbreaks of dry skin:

- ◆ stop smoking
- ◆ drink plenty of water
- ◆ watch the environment – dry air (low humidity) increases the risk of dry skin. Increasing humidity can help, which can be achieved by placing a damp towel on a warm radiator
- ◆ reduce the length of your bath or shower
- ◆ avoid harsh soaps and bubble baths.

These lifestyle changes may help to reduce the dryness of the skin but further moisturising may still be required, in which case emollients (moisturisers) can be used.

Emollients

Emollients are used to soothe, hydrate, and moisture the skin. They can reduce dryness, help with itching, reduce scaling, and soften cracks. They are applied directly to the skin and can be used frequently to help reduce water loss from the skin. They are readily available to purchase from supermarkets and pharmacies.

Soap substitutes

Soap substitutes are used to replace traditional soaps. They will help to lock in moisture while still providing the same level of cleanliness.

Shower gels and bath additives

Traditional shower and bath gels can cause the skin to become dry. Emollient bath and shower products will help to lock in moisture while still providing the same level of cleanliness.

Emollients often need to be applied even when the skin appears to be fine. This will help to prevent future outbreaks of dry skin.

There are various types of emollients which can help to treat and prevent dry skin. If you are not sure which product(s) would be best for you speak to your local pharmacist.