

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.

Ref
Emollients PrescQIPP
CCG Think Medicines
Prescribing of medication available to purchase over the counter in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

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

Emollient Information Leaflet





What are emollients?

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

Why use emollients?

Applying emollient regularly is worthwhile as it can prevent eczema and other dry skin conditions from becoming worse. It may reduce or remove the need for other treatments that may cause side effects, e.g. steroid creams.

Which emollient should I use?

There is a wide range available and they all work to keep water in the skin. They can be creams and ointments. You may need to try more than one before you find the one that suits you best.

Which are better: ointments or creams?

Ointments tend to cause fewer problems with skin sensitivity as, unlike creams, ointments usually do not contain preservatives. Ointments are greasier than creams, so stay on the skin longer and tend to work better. However, applying them can be messy.

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.

How to apply emollients

- Wash hands and apply thinly - just so the skin glistens - gently and quickly 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.

Safety advice when using emollients

If you are using paraffin-based emollients, keep away from fire, flames, and cigarettes - dressings and clothing soaked with the ointment can be ignited easily.

If your emollient is in a pot or tub, use a clean spoon or spatula to remove the product - this reduces the risk of infections.

Take care when entering the bath/shower after applying emollients as they make surfaces slippery.

Bathing and washing

Avoid bubble baths and soaps as they can be irritating and dry the skin.

Bathe regularly in tepid (lukewarm) water only. Regular bathing cleans and helps prevent infection by removing scales, crusts, dried blood, and dirt.

Use an emollient as a soap substitute - most emollients can be used in this way. Apply the emollient prior to washing and directly afterwards onto damp skin. Alternatively you could use a bath or shower emollient designed specifically for washing, then apply your usual leave-on emollient afterwards. Some doctors prefer to recommend the first option as they think this method is better at moisturising the skin. When drying do not rub with a towel but pat the skin dry to avoid damage to the skin.

Below is a table of the amount of cream or ointment needed if they were to be applied twice a day for one month. Examples include:

Area of Body	Creams or ointment
Face	60-120g
Both hands	100-200g
Both legs	400-800g
Upper body	1600g

Emollients with antimicrobials

These should only be used where infection is clinically significant in flare ups. Use should be targeted and short-term.

Warning Paraffin-based emollients are flammable, keep them away from lights and flames.