

'USING EMOLLIENTS SAFELY' FIRE SAFETY CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES 7TH OCTOBER

There is a fire risk with all emollients whether they contain paraffin or not.

REMINDER - MHRA DRUG SAFETY UPDATE

- In December 2018, the MHRA issued an alert extending the warning about the risk of severe and fatal burns to all paraffin-based emollients regardless of paraffin concentration.
- Data provided by researchers, at Anglia Ruskin University, suggests there is also a risk for paraffin-free emollients.
- The emollient products are not flammable in, or of themselves. However, they act as an accelerant increasing the speed of ignition and intensity of the fire when fabric with residue dried on it is ignited.
- There were 50 fire incidents (49 fatal) reported by Fire and Rescue Services across the UK between 2000 and November 2018, in which emollients were known to have been used by the victim or were present at the fire premises.
- Read the full MHRA Drug Safety Update from December 2018 [here](#).

ADVICE TO PATIENTS

Emollients are an important and effective treatment for chronic dry skin conditions and people should continue to use these products safely.

When prescribing, recommending, dispensing, selling, or applying emollient products to patients instruct them to:

- **Keep away from fire, flames and cigarettes when using all types of emollients (both paraffin-based and paraffin-free).** Dressings, clothing and bedding that have been in contact with an emollient can easily catch fire. The risk is greater when emollient preparations are applied to large areas of the body or when dressings and clothing become soaked with emollient.
- **When applying emollients, take care to ensure that it does not soak into seating, soft furnishings and bedding.** This is especially important if a person spends extended periods in a bed or armchair due to illness or impaired mobility. A build-up of emollient residue in these fabrics can increase the risk of fire.
- **Tell you if they normally smoke.** Signpost help and advice to support people to stop smoking.
- **If they use home oxygen it is important not to touch, handle or operate cylinders or liquid oxygen systems when they have applied emollient products to their hands.** Wash their hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly before handling any oxygen-based equipment.
- **Tell their relatives or carers about their treatment and show them the leaflet.** Those who care for people can help to keep them safe by understanding and reducing the related risks. The outer packaging and product containers of their emollients should include a warning about the fire hazard.
- **Get expert fire safety advice.** Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service can provide specialist advice for individuals and their home during a free Safe and Well visit. Find out more on the website at: www.cambsfire.gov.uk/safeandwell or call 0800 917 9994.

CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

A system-wide campaign in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council Public Health. Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service and NHS health providers is launching on the 7th October this year. Your GP practice, dispensing doctors, care homes and community pharmacies will be provided with support materials from w/c 30th September to increase public awareness of the safety steps that should be taken to minimise any fire risks when using emollients.

These support materials include:

- **Patient information leaflets** - to be given directly to patients when purchasing these products over the counter and handed out to patients during discussions.
- **Posters** - to display in your waiting areas to increase awareness.
- **Large Dispensing bags** (*dispensing doctors and community pharmacies only*) - to be used when supplying prescriptions for emollients to both collection and delivery patients, and also when products are purchased over the counter by the public.
- **Carers leaflets** (*care homes or available at request*) - to support people caring for individuals in the community.

These materials should aid discussions with patients on how to continue to use their emollients safely.

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