



Using your emollients safely



An information guide for patients

Emollients

What are they?

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.

Emollients are often used to help people of all ages manage dry, itchy or scaly skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis.

These preparations are available as lotions, sprays, creams, ointments, bath oils and shower products as well as soap substitutes.



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

However, these preparations are an important and effective treatment for dry skin conditions, and you should continue to use these products safely.

How can you use your emollients safely?

It is very important that you do the following to ensure you are kept safe whilst using these products:



Keep away from fire, flames and cigarettes when using any type of emollient (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.



Change clothing and bedding regularly (preferably daily).

Emollients soak into fabric and residues build-up which can increase the fire risk. Washing fabrics at high temperatures may reduce the build-up of emollients but does not remove it entirely.



When applying emollients, take care to ensure that it does not soak into seating, soft furnishings and bedding. This is especially important if you spend 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 your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you normally smoke. They will be able to offer you help and advice to stop smoking.

If you use home oxygen it is important not to touch, handle or operate cylinders or liquid oxygen systems when you have applied emollient products to your hands. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly before handling any oxygen-based equipment.



Tell your relatives or carers about your treatment and show them this leaflet. Those who care for you can help to keep you safe by understanding and reducing the related risks. The outer packaging and product containers of your emollients should include a warning about the fire hazard.



Get expert fire safety advice. Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service can provide specialist advice for you and your 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.



Further information

Further information on using emollients can be found online at:

- www.cambridgeshireandpeterboroughccg.nhs.uk
- www.cambsfire.gov.uk
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/emollients

Contact us

If you require further advice or have any queries regarding information in this leaflet. Please contact:

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This document is also available in other languages, large print, and audio format upon request.

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This leaflet has been produced by local partners within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough including Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council Public Health, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and NHS health providers.



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