



Caring for people who use emollients



Advice for carers

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.



People you care for may be using these 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 support people you care for to use these products safely.

Advise the person you are caring for to:



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.



Tell their doctor, nurse or pharmacist if they normally smoke. These professionals can offer people help and advice to stop smoking.



Wash their hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly before handling any oxygen-based equipment. It is important to remind people you care for using home oxygen not to touch, handle or operate cylinders or liquid oxygen systems when they have applied emollient products to their hands.

What else can you do?



When applying emollients to any individual, take care to ensure that it does not soak into seating, soft furnishings and bedding. This is especially important for people who 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.



Be extra vigilant looking for unsafe practices by the people you care for. People who have or are developing memory or concentrations issues, have a diagnosis of dementia and have a previous history of smoking or otherwise vulnerable may require further support. Record any concerns in the care plan and inform relatives, carers, partner agencies and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service if the person does not follow the advice given so these services can offer further support or take action to support vulnerable individuals.



Regularly remind those you care for about the fire safety information you have given them and check they have remembered and understood. A patient information leaflet to support patients on using emollients safely is available to support these conversations.



Contact Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service for specialist advice. The fire service can provide a free Safe and Well visit for individuals and their home. Find out more on the website at www.cambsfire.gov.uk/safeandwell or call 0800 917 9994.

Further information

Further information on supporting people you care for who are 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 the **Patient Experience Team**:

- NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG
Patient Experience Team, Lockton House, Clarendon Road,
Cambridge CB2 8FH
- 0800 279 2535 (FREEPHONE)
- capccg.pet@nhs.net

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.

