

Patient Information

How to Manage Dry Skin



Emollients / Moisturisers

Emollients will help soothe and hydrate your skin by sealing in moisture.

Emollients will help reduce scaling, flaking, cracking and irritation from dryness.

Emollients will help to remove dead skin cells gently and help restore the barrier function of the skin to reduce moisture loss. This may make the skin appear redder at first as scale is removed.

Emollients applied regularly will help your skin to feel softer, more comfortable and reduce the risk of infection.

Emollients are available as:

- **Lotions** – good for hairy or damaged areas of skin such as, weeping eczema, as they are thin and spread easily, however offer limited moisturising benefits.
- **Sprays** – they absorb quickly and are good for hard-to-reach areas and sore or infected skin that should not be touched. These can be expensive.
- **Creams** - good for daytime use as they are not very greasy and are absorbed quickly. Examples include Doublebase, Adex, Diprobase, Epaderm cream, Aveeno, Cerave etc.
- **Ointments** – good for very dry, thickened skin and night-time use as they are greasy, thick and very moisturising. They are usually free of preservatives so are suitable for sensitive skin, but should not be used on weeping skin. Examples include Paraffin gel, Epaderm ointment, emulsifying ointment etc. **Keep away from fire, flames and cigarettes when using paraffin-based emollients as they are flammable**



Emollient baths

Emollient baths help in the management of dry skin conditions.

A bath may help reduce dryness, flaking and itch. An emollient bath infuses the skin with moisture. The skin is most receptive to emollients and prescribed topical preparations following an emollient bath.

How to bathe

- Always use a bath additive.
- Avoid bubble bath and fragranced products including essential oils.
- There are a few bath-additive options which are available from your pharmacy without prescription:
 - **Emulsifying ointment / Epaderm ointment / Silcocks Base** – 2 dessert spoons whisked and dissolved into a jug of boiling water and then added to a warm bath.
 - **Oilatum / Oilatum Plus** – added as directed on the bottle to a warm bath.
 - **Emulsiderm** – added as directed on the bottle to a warm bath.
- Use warm water NOT hot. Hot baths can increase the levels of itch and dryness after the bath.
- Soak for no longer than 7-10mins.
- With a cotton towel, gently pat the skin dry.
- Apply an emollient immediately to seal in moisture and prevent moisture loss.



Showers

- Keep showers brief, 5-10mins only. **Always remember to use a non-slip shower mat**
- Use warm water, avoid hot showers.
- Use a gentle, soap free and fragrance-free cleanser. There are many soap substitutes available from your pharmacy, for example, Elave sensitive body wash, Aveeno body wash, E45 emollient shower cream, Oilatum shower gel.
- Avoid scrubbing the skin.
- Remember to use a gentle shampoo, for example, Elave shampoo.
- With a cotton towel, gently pat the skin dry.
- Apply an emollient immediately to seal in moisture and prevent moisture loss.

Emollient tips

- Emollients should be fragrance free.
- Apply emollient at least twice daily in a thin layer, enough to make the skin glisten. Use approximately 500 – 600g per week (more if needed).
- Apply in long downward motions with clean washed hands.

This reduces friction and heat build-up which contributes to itch and prevents the hair follicles from becoming blocked and irritated.

- Reapply as necessary. Do not wait for the skin to become dry and itchy again.
- To prevent contamination, instead of using your fingers always decant emollients from tubs using a clean spoon onto a clean paper towel or tissue. Pump bottles and squeeze tubes are convenient for this reason.
- An emollient with menthol can be used on unbroken skin to help soothe itch, for example, Aveeno skin relief cream with menthol or Suu balm.
- Emollient creams stored in the fridge are cooling and soothing on itchy irritated skin.
- Avoid Aqueous cream as it contains an irritant to dry skin.



Dry skin tips

Wear soft cotton fabrics next to the skin.

Shower away perspiration after exercise with gentle cleanser and apply an emollient immediately after e.g. Elave.

Use an emollient as a skin barrier prior to swimming.

Keep room temperatures ambient. Avoid sitting beside radiators or fireplaces or prolonged periods of time.

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