

Top Tips for Using emollients

- It is important to remember that to gain maximum benefit emollients should be used liberally and frequently (at least 3 or 4 times a day).
- Applying straight after a shower or bath, helps to retain moisture and stop the skin from drying out. It is best to dry by patting with a towel rather than by rubbing, which can irritate the skin.
- Always apply following the natural direction of hair growth so that the hair follicles do not become blocked.
- You can warm or cool emollients to make them more acceptable to use e.g. keep in the fridge or warm in an airing cupboard.
- You may find it preferable to use different products for different areas of the body or for different times of day (e.g. creams for hands and face, ointments for night time or less visible part of the body).
- If your emollient comes in a large pot or tub, use a clean spoon or spatula to remove the product rather than your fingers—this reduces the risk of infections from unclean hands, contaminating the pots/tubs.

Safety points - when using emollients

- If you are using paraffin-based emollients, keep away from fires, naked flames and cigarettes , since dressings and clothing soaked with paraffin based products can be easily ignited. You can check if your product contains paraffin by reading the list of ingredients.
- Take care when using emollients in a bath, shower or on a tiled floor as there's a risk of slipping – protect the floor with a towel or sheet, wash your bath or shower afterwards with hot water and washing up liquid, then dry thoroughly with a towel .

This leaflet was prepared by the Pharmaceutical Team, Croydon CCG in consultation with Croydon's Patient and Public Reference Group.

For enquiries relating to the content of this leaflet please contact your GP practice or the Pharmaceutical Team on 0203 668 1307

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Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group

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EMOLLIENTS Information for Patients

What are emollients?

Emollient is the medical term used for preparations which provide moisture to the skin. They work by providing a protective layer over the skin surface that reduces loss of water and so combats dry skin.

Dry skin is one of the main symptoms of eczema (dermatitis) and psoriasis, therefore emollients play an important role in the management of these conditions.

Many people may suffer with dry skin at some point, but emollients will only be **prescribed** if you **have a diagnosed skin condition**.

Most emollients are readily available to buy without prescription from your local pharmacy .

Emollients – The Differences

There are many types of emollients and they can be classified according to how they are applied:

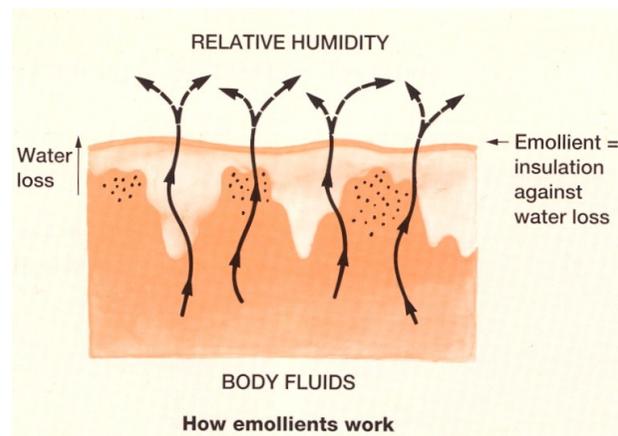
- **Lotions, creams and ointments:** are applied directly to the skin.
- **Soap Substitutes:** used instead of soap to cleanse the skin.
- **Bath and shower oils:** added to bath water or directly to the skin whilst showering.

Emollients vary in their consistency and ease of application, based on their water content.

Lotions have the highest level of water and spread very easily.

Creams have a higher oil content and are richer than a lotion. Ointments contain very little, if any, water and tend to be more greasy, which can make them stiff and harder to apply. The lack of water can mean ointments are preservative-free.

There is no single emollient product suitable for all conditions/patients. Selection of a product will be based on the affected area of the body, the severity of dryness and individual preference and acceptability of the product.



Oatmeal Containing Emollients

Healthcare professionals in Croydon are reviewing the prescribing of emollient products that contain oats, such as the **Aveeno**[®] product range, which contain colloidal oatmeal or oat extracts.

This is because the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) sets out a list of conditions where **Aveeno**[®] can be prescribed within the NHS. The ACBS advice has not always been strictly followed, however it is now recognised that this will reduce unnecessary costs that can be redirected towards other health services in Croydon.

If you or your child do not have one of the listed conditions, your GP practice may discontinue future prescriptions and consider the option to prescribe an alternative preparation.

Changes to routine use of bath and shower preparations

The clinical value of emollients marketed specifically as bath and shower preparations is now questionable.

Recent evidence has shown they add no additional benefit over using a normal emollient lotion, cream or ointment when bathing or showering.

On the basis of this evidence, Clinicians in Croydon will **no longer routinely** prescribe emollient bath or shower preparations.

GP practices in Croydon will review patients who are currently receiving emollient bath or shower preparations to ensure these are no longer prescribed unnecessarily. This will save the CCG money, that can be reinvested in other services that are supported by strong evidence.



If you are a patient who has had their emollient bath or shower prescription discontinued, it is important that you follow the **'Top Tips for Using Emollients'** to make sure you are maximising the benefits of your other emollient product(s).