Emollients are medical moisturisers which lubricate the skin. They are very important in the treatment of conditions in which the skin is dry and itchy for example eczema (dermatitis) and psoriasis. They help repair the damaged natural barrier of the skin, help protect from irritation and infections and can reduce redness, swelling and itching.

There are many different emollients available in many different formulations (E.g. Soap substitutes, Creams, Ointments, Bath additives, Spray). Most can be purchased over the counter. This leaflet outlines some of the emollients we regularly prescribe/recommend. There is no RIGHT emollient and everyone will have different preferences.

Types of Emollients

Soap Substitutes

Soap dries the skin and can make it itchy. Use soap substitutes for all washing. These cleanse the skin effectively BUT do not lather like soap.

Many creams and ointments may be used as soap substitutes.

Examples:

Cetraben Diprobase cream Wash E45
Emulsifying ointment Hydromol ointment Epaderm.
Dermol 500 (which contains antibacterial)

Formulations for shower e.g. Dermol shower, Oilatum shower, E45 Shower
**Creams**
These are not particularly greasy. They are absorbed quite quickly so do not stain clothes. They are good for daytime use.

Examples:
Diprobase cream  Cetraben  Hydromol cream
E45 cream  Oilatum cream  Aveeno cream  Doublebase
Containing antibacterial: Dermol 500
Containing urea: Calmurid  Hydromol extra

**Ointments**
These are greasy and are particularly useful for very dry or itchy skin because they hydrate the skin better than creams. They do take longer to be absorbed and may make your clothes greasy. Some people prefer to use these at night.

Examples:
50% white soft paraffin in liquid paraffin (50/50 mix)
Epaderm  Hydromol  Emulsifying ointment
Emollin 50:50 spray. A spray formulation which some people find easier to apply

WARNING Skin products containing white soft paraffin and emulsifying ointment are easily ignited with a naked flame or a cigarette.

**Bath Additives**
Bubbles (like soap) can irritate and dry skin. Emollient bath additives should be added to the bath water to help to moisturise your skin and leave a fine film on skin after bathing.

TAKE CARE as they will make the bath slippery.

Examples:
Oilatum  Bath E45  Balneum
Hydromol  Diprobath  Aveeno bath oil
With antimicrobials: Oilatum plus (with anti microbial)  Dermol 600
EMOLLIENT TIPS

• Apply regularly. You cannot use too much emollient and they do not have
dangerous side effects.
• Current advice is patients may need to use a big tub of emollient each
week (250-500g).
• Using emollients soon after a bath or shower can make them more
effective.
• Aqueous cream should only be used as a soap substitute. It is not
sufficiently moisturising to be used as a leave on cream and may make
skin dryer.
• Apply cream/ointment in the direction of hair growth to avoid blocking
hair follicles. (stroke the cream / ointment in a downwards direction down
your arm / leg)
• You can warm or cool cream/ointment if you want to make it more
acceptable to you.
• If frequent skin infections are a problem then an emollient with antibacterial
additives may be beneficial (e.g. Dermol 500 products, Oilatum plus).
• Emollients containing urea (Hydromol intensive, Balneum Cream, Calmurid,
Eucerin, Flexitol heel balm) can be useful for an extra moisturising effect
in extremely dry skin conditions such as ichthyosis.
• Occasionally emollients may sting inflamed skin but this should settle down
over a few days. If it persists then the emollient should be changed.
• The skin is one organ so you can treat the whole skin not just the affected
area.
• Even when skin starts to improve it is sensible to continue using emollients.
The aim is to stop skin from drying rather than to treat dry skin.
A well hydrated skin can do its job more effectively, reduce itching and
prevent infections.

There is no RIGHT emollient.

We are able to supply some samples in dermatology to help you find an
emollient that suits your skin and that you will use regularly.

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another
language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call
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