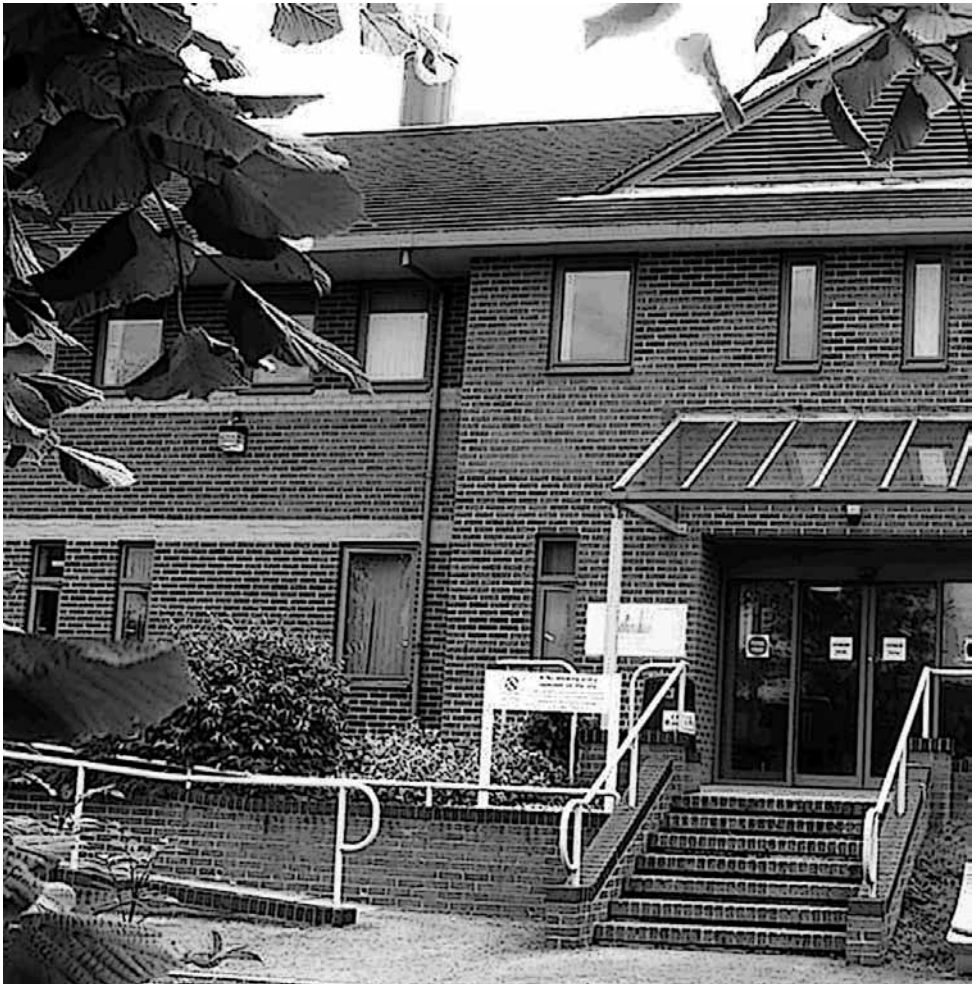


Dermatology Department, The Churchill

# EMOLLIENTS

Information for patients



# EMOLLIENTS

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:

Cetaben	Diprobase cream	Wash E45
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Emulsifying ointment	Hydromol ointment	Epaderm.
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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. Dermal 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 **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**