

How much emollient should be applied?

The quantity of leave-on emollient required will vary depending on the size of the person, the severity of the skin condition, and whether the emollient is also being used as a soap substitute. The table below is a guide for suitable quantities needed for an adult for twice daily application for a month, but can be adjusted depending on frequency of application.

Area of body	Creams or ointments
Face	120 g
Both hands	120g
Scalp	500g
Both arms or both legs	500g
Trunk	500 g
Groins and genitalia	120g
Whole Body	1000g

Lifestyle

A light moisturiser should be applied during the day and a greasy one at night. The greasier the emollient, the more effective at retaining hydration. You may wish to use different types of emollients at different times of the day, on different areas of the body or when severity of your condition

varies. For example, use a cream in the morning if dressing to go to work or school and an ointment in the evening when wearing pyjamas. The best moisturizer for you is the one you use regularly.

Possible side effects from emollients

Emollients used for skin condition tend to be bland and non-perfumed. However, some creams contain preservatives, fragrances and other additives. Occasionally, some people become sensitised (allergic) to an ingredient. If you suspect that you are sensitive to an emollient then speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for advice.

Washing clothes for children

It is advisable to put the washing machine on 60 degrees. This ensures pipes are kept free of grease as well as clothes thoroughly washed to prevent any local irritation.

Further information:

NHS Choices : www.nhs.uk

Primary Care Dermatology Society : www.pcids.org.uk/clinical-guidance/atopiceczema#management

National Eczema Society: www.eczema.org

National Psoriasis Foundation: www.psoriasis.org

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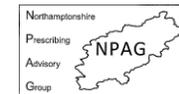
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Emollients and how to use them



What are emollients?

Emollient is simply the medical word for a moisturiser. They help soothe the skin and provide relief from itching and dryness. Patients who do not have a diagnosed dermatological condition or risk to skin integrity (breakdown of skin) should purchase emollients over the counter e.g. from pharmacies or health and beauty stores.

How do emollients work? An emollient replaces natural oils that help keep water in the skin to prevent it becoming dry, cracked, and itchy. It also traps moisture in the skin and forms a protective oily layer on the outer skin, which helps skin to repair and improve hydration.

Types of emollients

Emollients can be used either as a soap substitute, or leave on emollient. There are many different types of emollients, and they can be classified according to how they are used and how greasy they are.

Lotion: Contains the most water and least oil, so

are the least effective in moisturising the skin.

Creams: Have a mixture of oil and water. Less greasier than ointments, therefore easier to spread onto the skin. Must be used frequently and liberally to prevent the skin from drying out. Good for daily application.

Creams + : Some creams have additives such as urea to make them better at dealing with very hard skin. These are particularly useful for hands and feet and other very thickened areas.

Ointment: Greasy in nature, they are usually made of white soft paraffin or liquid paraffin and **are ideal for very dry or thickened skin**. Normally applied at night, they do not usually contain preservatives and are therefore less likely to cause skin reactions.

How often should emollient treatment be applied? Emollients should be applied as frequently as possible. Optimally 3-4 times a day, although some longer acting emollients are suitable for twice daily application. Emollient use should be continued even when the skin condition has improved. Emollients can and should be applied at other times during the day and always after a bath. Reviewing the need of your prescribed emollient should be carried out by your GP annually.

Which emollient is best?

There is no 'best emollient'. The type (or types) to use depends on the dryness of the skin, the area of the skin involved, and what

is comfortable and acceptable to you. If you only have mild skin dryness and do not experience flare ups frequently, a lotion/cream may be the best option. For moderate to severe dryness, a thicker cream or ointment would be ideal to use. Areas of weeping eczema will usually be managed with a cream/lotion, as ointments will tend to be very messy.

How to apply emollient treatment?

Step 1: Wash your hands to remove invisible bacteria.



Step 2: Do not put fingers into tubs to scoop out the emollient, as you may introduce bacteria into the emollient tub. To reduce the risk of infection, transfer some emollient onto a clean plate using a clean dessert spoon. If you have cream in a tub with a pump top, you can pump directly onto your hand.



Step 3: Emollients should be applied to the skin in a downward direction of hair growth and leave in a thin layer to soak in – this can take up to 10 minutes. Please do not rub emollients in.



How and when should topical steroids be used (if and when prescribed)?

Intensive use of emollients can reduce the need for topical corticosteroids (reduces skin inflammation). The quantity and frequency of use of emollients should be far greater than that of other therapies

given. If a topical corticosteroid is required, emollients should be applied optimally 15-30 minutes before the topical corticosteroid. The skin should be moist, but not slippery, when applying the steroid.

Bathing and washing

Bathe regularly in tepid water only, this cleans and helps prevent infection by removing scales, crusts, dried blood and dirt. Applying emollients after bathing increases skin hydration, as water is still trapped in the skin. Any emollient (except white soft paraffin) should be used as a soap substitute, as normal soap dries the skin. This can be applied prior to washing and directly afterwards onto damp skin. They provide greater moisturising than bath emollients that don't have enough contact with the skin. When drying, pat the skin dry to avoid damage to the skin. The use of bath emollients/oils and shower products are not routinely recommended for the majority of dermatological conditions.

What precautions should be taken with emollients?

Ointments and creams used in the bath and shower can make the surface slippery so take extra care. Paraffin-based emollients are flammable, so avoid applying your emollient near any open flames or potential causes of ignition, such as cigarettes. If you find that an emollient is making your skin sore and/or very itchy, you may be allergic to one of the ingredients and you should discuss this with your doctor or nurse. If you are having ultraviolet light treatment or radiotherapy, ask for specific guidance on emollient use, as instructions may differ slightly.