

## Position statement on the prescribing of bath and shower emollients on GP FP10 prescription

Wandsworth CCG do not support the prescribing of bath emollients due to the lack of evidence of efficacy. Patients should be advised to:

- Use a cream or ointment listed below as a soap substitute during baths
- Alternatively, self-purchase bath emollients from community pharmacies and retail outlets.

Wandsworth CCG will only support the prescribing of shower emollients on request from an NHS dermatology specialist. Patients should be advised to:

- Use a cream or ointment listed below as a soap substitute during showers
- Alternatively, self-purchase shower emollients from community pharmacies and retail outlets.

### Rationale

Although evidence supports the use of a leave-on emollients and there is clinical consensus around soap substitutes, less agreement exists around the benefits of shower and bath emollients to treat eczema<sup>1</sup>.

A randomised controlled trial (BATHE, 2018) found no evidence of clinical benefit from including emollient bath additives in the standard management of eczema in children<sup>2</sup>. There is no consensus of clinical opinion that such therapy is effective.

The evidence indicates that the quantities of emollients deposited on the skin from the bath and shower emollients are likely to be lower than emollients used as soap substitutes. Using emollients as soap substitutes will provide better moisturisation of the skin<sup>3</sup>.

The following creams and emollients can be used as a soap substitute or a bath substitute. Patients should be instructed to apply to the skin before bathing / showering, then rinse it off completely<sup>4</sup>.

| <b>Soap Substitutes</b> (costs as per July 2018 Drug Tariff prices) |      |       |                                |      |       |
|---|------|-------|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| <b>Creams</b>   | Size | Cost  | <b>Ointments</b>               | Size | Cost  |
| Epimax <sup>®</sup> Cream   | 500g | £2.49 | Emulsifying Ointment           | 500g | £2.92 |
| ZeroAQS <sup>®</sup> Emollient Cream                                | 500g | £3.29 | Zeroderm <sup>®</sup> Ointment | 500g | £4.10 |
| Aquamax <sup>®</sup> Cream  | 500g | £3.99 | Hydromol <sup>®</sup> Ointment | 500g | £4.89 |

Caution: creams and emollients can make surfaces and objects very slippery, therefore extra care is required when getting in and out of the bath / shower<sup>3</sup>.

As with other types of emollient, patient acceptability is likely to be key in finding a suitable product<sup>3</sup>. The prescribing of shower emollients may therefore be considered on request from an NHS dermatology specialist only with selection based on the local formulary.

Regardless of the type of product the patients use to wash with, it should not replace the regular use of a leave-on emollient. Advise patients to continue using standard emollients in addition to any soap substitute used<sup>3</sup>.

**WARNING: Paraffin-based emollients are flammable.** This risk is greater when these preparations are applied to large areas of the body, and clothing or dressings become soaked with the ointment.

Patients should be told to keep away from the fire or flames, and not to smoke when using these preparations. **The risk of fire should be considered when using large quantities of any paraffin-based emollients<sup>5</sup>.**

## References

1. DTB (2007). Bath emollients for atopic eczema: why use them? Drug & Therapeutics Bulletin 45(10): 73 - 75
2. Emollient bath additives for the treatment of childhood eczema (BATHE): multicentre pragmatic parallel group randomised controlled trial of clinical and cost effectiveness - BMJ 2018;361:k1332
3. PrescQIPP (accessed May 2018): <https://www.prescqipp.info/resources/send/174-emollients/1951-bulletin-76-cost-effective-and-appropriate-prescribing-of-emollients>
4. Emollient Factsheet: REFERENCE will input link once it the factsheet is online.
5. MHRA (accessed July 2018): <https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/paraffin-based-skin-emollients-on-dressings-or-clothing-fire-risk>

## Guidance for clinicians

### Recommendations

- Ensure dermatological condition is clearly documented. The prescribing of emollients for non-clinical cosmetic purposes are not recommended and should be reviewed.
- Where appropriate, offer a range of soap substitute emollients (as above) available on formulary to the patient.
- Prescribe a preparation that is suitable for the patient and review the prescription frequently.
- Provide advice on the risk of fire with paraffin-based products (See [MHRA](#) safety advice for information).
- Bath and shower emollients are readily available to buy and should not be prescribed for new patients.
- Existing patients should be reviewed and switched to more cost-effective formulary emollients. Shower emollients can continue to be prescribed under the advice of NHS dermatology specialist only.

## Guidance for patients, carers and guardians

- Community pharmacists can offer advice on how to manage the symptoms of dry skin, including eczema and psoriasis, and when to seek medical advice.
- Bath and shower emollients are readily available to buy from most community pharmacies and other retail outlets.

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