

Handy tips

- Do not have the water too hot
- Soak in the bath for 10-15 minutes each time
- Pat the skin dry, do not rub it
- Use a mat in the bath/ shower as emollients make surfaces slippery
- Apply emollients in the direction of the hair
- Smear emollients on, do not rub them in
- After bathing apply emollients while the skin is still damp
- Always keep a small pot of emollient with you when out.
- Always continue with an emollient when the skin has improved as this can reduce flare ups.
- If the skin gets hot and itchy keep a small pot in the fridge.
- If the emollient comes in a tub use a spoon to scoop it out, do not put hands in the tub.

Remember the emollient that works is the one that is used.

If you are given an emollient sample pack try each one until you find one that you like.

Important Information

There is a fire risk with all paraffin-containing emollients, and possibly even paraffin-free emollients. The risk is higher when they are applied to large body areas, or in large volumes repeatedly for more than a few days.

Patients, using these products should not smoke or go near naked flames because clothing or fabric such as bedding or bandages that have been in contact with an emollient or emollient-treated skin could rapidly ignite.

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Emollients

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What are emollients?

Emollients are moisturisers that have been used for many years to treat dry skin conditions and form an essential part of treatment. They vary from very light to greasy.

They work by moisturising the skin. This helps to smooth and soothe skin and reduce the itching. They can help protect the skin by forming a barrier over it which prevents further damage. A good routine with emollients can help prepare the skin for other treatments so they work better.

There are many different emollients available which can be confusing. Generally emollients are used in two ways and if possible both should be used in your routine:

- Ointments, creams, gels and lotions.
- Soap substitutes



Ointments, creams, gels and lotions

These are applied directly to the skin throughout the day and after bathing to prevent the skin from drying out.

It is recommended that adults use 500g of emollient per week and children use 250g per week.

Ointments are oil based and are greasy. They are good to use on very dry skin or last thing at night. They are not suited for infected skin that is wet and weepy or people who are very hairy. Ointments contain fewer ingredients and cause less stinging and allergic reactions.
E.g. *Zeroderm ointment, Epimax ointment, Cetraben ointment.*

Creams are a mixture of oil and water and are less greasy than an ointment. They are easy to use and quicker to absorb than an ointment. In order to keep the right consistency they contain emulsifiers. They also contain preservatives. These extra ingredients can cause stinging and allergic reactions in some people.
E.g. *ExCetra cream, Zerocream cream.*

Some creams contain an antimicrobial to help treat skin infections and reduce repeated infections
E.g. *Dermol cream*

Gels are an oil and water product but the way they are made produces a jelly like consistency. When applied to the skin the oil and water separate which produces a moisturising and cooling effect.
E.g. *Zerodouble Gel.*

Lotions have a higher water content than creams. This makes them easier to apply but less moisturising than other emollients.

Some lotions contain an antimicrobial to help treat skin infections and reduce repeated infections
E.g. *Dermol 500 lotion*

Soap substitutes

Soap should not be used on the skin as it strips it of its natural oils and dries it out. An emollient should be used instead. They can be applied prior to bathing if the skin stings when in contact with water or during bathing to cleanse the skin. People with dry hands should use an emollient soap substitute every time they wash their hands.

All of the products mentioned so far apart from *Zerodouble Gel* can be used as a soap substitute.