

In Focus: Bath Emollients

NHS

Dorset

Clinical Commissioning Group

Bath and shower preparations for dry and pruritic skin conditions

Background

In 2019, NHS England published “Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care”. Please see a link to this [here](#).

Section 5.3 addresses bath and shower preparations for dry and pruritic skin conditions and states that these should not be initiated in primary care and that current prescribing should be stopped as there is no clinical benefit.

The rationale for this has come from the paediatric study, BATHE. Over the period of one year, no advantage was identified to using a specific bath emollient compared to using their usual leave-on emollient to wash with. In most patient cases, the eczema improved in both study groups.

There is also a higher risk of falls in the bath for those who use bath emollients.

Recommendation

- Bath or shower products should not be initiated in patients unless recommended by specialists for severe eczema or infants under the age of 1 year. Patients should use a normal emollient applied directly to the skin when washing.
- Existing patients receiving bath emollients should have their treatment reviewed as part of a routine structured medication review. This includes all patients where their treatment was started by a specialist prior to 2019. The review should involve counselling the patient on using a normal emollient applied directly to the skin as an alternative, and look to deprescribe the bath emollient.

A patient information leaflet containing detailed advice is available [here](#) and is summarised below:

- Most emollients can be used as a soap substitute (except white soft paraffin alone). Use the product you have been advised or the one you find works best if specific advice has not been given.
- To use when washing, put a half to one teaspoonful in the palm of your hand and mix with small amount of warm water. This can then be applied to wet skin, and rinsed off with water.
- If having a bath or shower, creams, lotions or gels can be rubbed “neat” directly into the skin and then rinsed off with water
- If using a thick ointment in the bath or shower, this should be mixed with a small amount of water and applied to wet skin.
- Soap substitutes do not lather, but they are still effective in cleaning the skin
- Emollients can make the bath or shower cubicle slippery so take care
- Clean the bath or shower cubicle after use with washing up liquid and hot water to prevent build up

In patients who have a serious dermatological condition, continued usage may still be appropriate in a small number of cases. Advice and guidance/Consultant Connect should be used for advice if unsure.

References

[BMJ](#): Emollient bath additives for the treatment of childhood eczema (BATHE) – 18/03/2019

[NHSE](#): Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs – Version 2, June 2019

Contact us

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