

**NHS Rotherham CCG does not support the prescribing of emollients for dry skin. Self-care items such as moisturising creams, gels, bath oils, shower gel, ointments and balms for dry skin should be purchased from your local pharmacy, supermarket or shop.**

**You only need to visit your GP if your skin has become cracked and is weeping or bleeding or if it has become infected.** (If you have been diagnosed with a long term skin condition e.g. eczema/contact dermatitis/psoriasis and require repeat treatment on prescription you will be prescribed treatment.)

## DO YOUR BIT TO HELP

Please don't ask for emollients (moisturisers) on prescription. They can be bought elsewhere. Play your part in helping the NHS save money.

In 2016/17 we spent

**£516,444**

on emollients in Rotherham.  
Across England the NHS spent

**£83.5 million**

Occasionally, some people become allergic (sensitised) to an ingredient. This can make the skin inflammation worse rather than better.

If you suspect that you are sensitive to an emollient you should see your doctor for advice. There are many different types of emollients with various ingredients. A switch to a different type will usually sort out this uncommon problem. Note: ointments tend to cause fewer problems with skin sensitivity as, unlike creams, ointments usually do not contain preservatives.

# Emollients for dry skin

Treat yourself better



## What is dry skin?

Dry skin is very common condition which can occur at any age. It usually doesn't present a serious problem but can often be associated with other medical conditions such as eczema, contact dermatitis, and psoriasis.

## What causes dry skin?

The skin is made up of many different layers and it forms a natural barrier to protect our body from the outside environment. To help protect the outer layer of the skin from losing water, the skin produces an oily substance called sebum. If the skin doesn't have enough sebum, it loses water and feels dry.

## Common causes of dry skin

- Excessive bathing or showering,
- Scrubbing of the skin while washing, or use of harsh soaps that dissolve the protective layer of sebum.
- Environmental conditions that increase water loss such as very hot dry weather or central heating. Frequent exposure to wind and sun can evaporate water from the skin, making the surface feel itchy and dry.
- Decreased production of sebum. This is often a factor in the elderly.

## What can you do to help prevent and treat dry skin?

There are lifestyle changes you can make which can help to treat and prevent future outbreaks of dry skin:

**Stop smoking.**

**Drink plenty of water.**

**Watch the environment** – dry air (low humidity) increases the risk of dry skin. Increasing humidity can help which can be achieved by placing a damp towel on a warm radiator.

**Reduce the length of your baths or showers.**

**Avoid harsh soaps and bubble baths.**

These measures may help to reduce the dryness of the skin but further moisturising may still be required, in which case emollients (moisturisers) can be used.

There are various types of emollients which can help you to treat and prevent dry skin. These should be applied to the skin as a moisturiser. If you are not sure which product(s) are best for you speak to your local pharmacist.

## Soap substitute

Emollients can be used to replace traditional soaps. They help to lock in moisture while still providing the same level of cleanliness. Most emollients can be used instead of soap to wash.

Emollients often need to be applied even when the skin appears to be fine. This will help to prevent future outbreaks of dry skin.

## Shower gels and bath additives

Traditional shower and bath gels can cause the skin to become dry. Emollient bath and shower products will help lock in the moisture, however such preparations have no advantages over emollients.

Emollients can be used as a soap substitute as well as a moisturiser so there is no need to spend money on separate shower and bath products.

**WARNING**  
Paraffin-based emollients are flammable; keep them away from lights and flames.

