

## PARAFFIN-BASED EMOLLIENTS: fire risk

**The Pan Mersey Area Prescribing Committee recommends that the risk of fire should be considered when issuing paraffin-based emollient preparations**

### SAFETY

When patients are being treated with a paraffin-based emollient product that is covered by a dressing or clothing, there is a danger that smoking or using a naked flame could cause dressings or clothing to catch fire. Data suggests that there is also a risk for paraffin free emollients. The risk is greater when these preparations are applied to large areas of the body, or when dressings or clothing become soaked with emollient.

#### Advice for healthcare professionals

- > Emollients are an important and effective treatment for chronic dry skin conditions and people should continue to use these products. However, you must ensure patients and their carers understand the fire risk associated with the build-up of residue on clothing and bedding and can take action to minimise the risk.
- > When prescribing, recommending, dispensing, selling, or applying emollient products to patients, instruct them not to 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 can rapidly ignite.
- > There is a fire risk with all paraffin-containing emollients, regardless of paraffin concentration, and it also cannot be excluded with paraffin-free emollients. A similar risk may apply for other products which are applied to the skin over large body areas, or in large volumes for repeated use for more than a few days.
- > Be aware that washing clothing or fabric at a high temperature may reduce emollient build-up but not totally remove it.
- > Warnings, including an alert symbol, are being added to packaging to provide a visual reminder to patients and those caring for them about the fire hazard.
- > Report any fire incidents with emollients or other skin care products to the [Yellow Card Scheme](#).

#### Advice for patients

- > Do not smoke, use naked flames (or be near people who are smoking or using naked flames), or go near anything that may cause a fire while emollients are in contact with their medical dressings or clothing including the use of e-cigarettes.
- > Change clothing and bedding regularly - preferably daily - emollients soak into fabric and can become a fire hazard. Washing clothing or fabric at a high temperature may reduce emollient build-up but not totally remove it.
- > Risk of fire should be considered when using large quantities of any paraffin-based emollient (e.g. application of 100g or more at once or over a short period of time).

#### References

Adapted with kind permission from GMMG (2018). Emollient Ladder. Available upon request.

1. Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (2018). Paraffin-based skin emollients on dressings or clothing: fire risk. [online] Available at <https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/paraffin-based-skin-emollients-on-dressings-or-clothing-fire-risk>. [Accessed 19 March 2019]

**Note:** Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this statement may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy. In this situation, follow locally defined processes.

# EMOLLIENT LADDER

To be used in conjunction with the BNF, BNFC and the [Pan Mersey Skin chapter](#)

## Very Greasy

Cetraben Ointment®  
Emulsifying Ointment BP  
Hydromol Ointment®



WSP/LP Ointment®  
White Soft Paraffin Ointment  
Zeroderm Ointment®

## Greasy

Diprobase Ointment®  
DoubleBase Dayleave Gel®  
Doublebase Gel®



Zerodouble Gel®  
Zeroguent Cream®

## Medium

Aproderm Emollient Cream®  
Aproderm Colloidal oat cream®  
Aquamax Cream®  
Aveeno Cream®  
Cetraban Cream®  
Diprobase Cream®  
Ollatum®  
Zerobase Cream®  
Zerocream Cream®



Balneum Cream®  
Nutraplus Cream®  
Balneum Plus Cream®  
Calmurid Cream®  
Hydromol Intensive Cream®  
ImuDerm Cream®  
Dermol Cream®

## Light

Aveeno Lotion®  
E45 Lotion®  
Epimax Cream®



ZeroAQS Cream®  
Dermol 500 Lotion®

INCREASING RISK OF FIRE HAZARD

PARAFFIN CONTENT

### [MHRA Alert](#)

#### Paraffin-based skin emollients on dressings or clothing: fire risk

When patients are being treated with a paraffin-based emollient product that is covered by a dressing or clothing, there is a danger that smoking or using a naked flame could cause dressings or clothing to catch fire. The risk is greater when these preparations are applied to large areas of the body, or when dressings or clothing become soaked with emollient.

#### Advice for patients

- Do not smoke; use naked flames (or be near people who are smoking or using naked flames); or go near anything that may cause a fire while emollients are in contact with their medical dressings or clothing including the use of e-cigarettes.
- Change clothing and bedding regularly - preferably daily - emollients soak into fabric and can become a fire hazard. Washing clothing or fabric at a high temperature may reduce emollient build-up but not totally remove it.
- Risk of fire should be considered when using large quantities of any paraffin-based emollient (e.g. application of 100g or more at once or over a short period of time).