



EMOLLIENTS: Information for families

This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) describes how this medicine is given and some of its possible side effects. Each person reacts differently to medicines so your child will not necessarily experience every side effect mentioned. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist or telephone one of the contact numbers of this information sheet.

What is it for?

Emollients are creams, ointments or lotions that are applied to the skin to keep it moist.

They soften the skin and form a barrier against sources of irritation. They are often prescribed for skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis.

Emollients may come in a pump dispenser, tube or tub. If the emollient comes in a tub, to avoid spreading germs when you dip your fingers in, we advise that you put the amount of emollient needed for each application into a separate bowl using a spoon. Apply the emollient from the bowl, washing it and the spoon afterwards in warm soapy water ready for the next application.

After you have applied emollient to your child's skin, wash your hands thoroughly with soap to remove any excess oiliness.

As well as applying emollient directly to your child's skin, the doctor may prescribe emollient bath products, such as bath oil or shower cream. These should be used instead of your child's regular washing products, such as soap or bubble bath. They will lock moisture from the bath or shower, reducing dryness further. Some need to be diluted in the bath water but others can be applied directly to the skin like a liquid soap.

The effects of emollients do not last long so you will need to apply them to your child's skin frequently, sometimes several times a day, according to the instructions on the label.

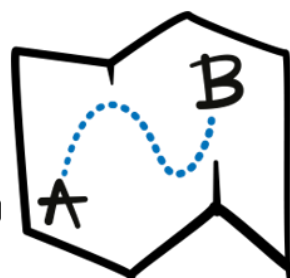
How is it given?

There are many different types of emollient in use at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Ointments are greasy and form the best barrier against water and irritants. Creams are a mixture of oil and water and are thinner than ointments. Lotions are thinner still and easier to apply to hairy areas. Gels have a high water content so are easier to apply to the scalp.

The type your child is prescribed depends on their skin problem.

Emollients should be spread evenly on the skin. Your clinical nurse specialist may also draw up a schedule so you know which cream should be applied at each time of day.



What are the side-effects?

Side effects are uncommon, but ingredients in some emollients can cause a rash.

If this occurs, tell your doctor. Your child may need to try other types of emollients to find one which suits.

The moisturising effects in emollients can make the bath or shower tray very slippery. We advise you to use a non-slip bath mat and clean it and the bath thoroughly after each use. Your child's skin and your hands will also be very slippery after using an emollient so take care when picking them up. Wash your hands thoroughly before handling anything hot or sharp.

Emollients and other medications

Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving your child any other medicines, including herbal or complementary medicines.

Emollients are safe to use with other medicines, however if you're using a steroid cream or another treatment for your skin condition, wait at least 30

minutes after putting on your emollient to apply it. This avoids diluting the effect of the treatment and spreading it to areas of skin that do not need it.

Important

- Keep medicines in a safe place where children cannot reach them.
- Keep medicines in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight and away from heat.
- If your doctor decides to stop treatment, return any unused emollient to your pharmacist. Do not flush down the toilet or throw it away.
- If you forget to give your child a dose, give it as soon as you remember. Do not give a double dose if it is already time to give the next one.
- Your family doctor (GP) will need to give you a repeat prescription for emollients
- Some medicines will need to be ordered by your local pharmacist- ask your GP for another prescription with enough time (when you have about 2 weeks of your medicine left) to ensure you do not run out.

For further information please contact:

Medicines Information: 020 7829 8608 or via the Medications page on the MyGOSH app (available Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)

Dermatology team via GOSH switchboard: 020 7405 9200 or via the MyGOSH app

Disclaimer

Please read this information sheet from GOSH alongside the patient information leaflet (PIL) provided by the manufacturer. If you do not have a copy of the manufacturer's patient information leaflet please talk to your pharmacist. A few products do not have a marketing authorisation (licence) as a medicine and therefore there is no PIL.

For children in particular, there may be conflicts of information between the manufacturer's patient information leaflet (PIL) and guidance provided by GOSH and other healthcare providers. For example, some manufacturers may recommend, in the patient information leaflet, that a medicine is not given to children aged under 12 years. In most cases, this is because the manufacturer will recruit adults to clinical trials in the first instance and therefore the initial marketing authorisation (licence) only covers adults and older children.

For new medicines, the manufacturer then has to recruit children and newborns into trials (unless the medicine is not going to be used in children and newborns) and subsequently amend the PIL with the approved information. Older medicines may have been used effectively for many years in children without problems but the manufacturer has not been required to collect data and amend the licence. This does not mean that it is unsafe for children and young people to be prescribed such a medicine 'off-licence/off-label'. However, if you are concerned about any conflicts of information, please discuss with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

