

Emollients: General Information

It is important to note that there is no one product which suits all. Patient preference, health education and expectations are key to ensuring good compliance with use. This ultimately determines if an individual emollient is suitable. We therefore suggest that any emollient costing less than £5 per 500g (or 500ml) can be considered as a formulary line in the community, but those recommended on page 2 are the preferred initial choices.

It is crucial to advise patients at home to apply emollients liberally and frequently (at least 2-4 times a day; more frequent use is safe.) In Care homes it helps care staff to have a frequency of use on scripts so this is transferred to the Medication Administration record.

Creams are less greasy than ointments so may be preferred and aid compliance. However, ointments are better for very dry skin.

Suitable quantities of emollients (ex BNF)

Area of body (Adult)	Amount per month-	
	Creams and Ointments	Lotions
Face	60–120 g	400 mL
Both hands	100–200 g	800 mL
Scalp	200–400 g	800 mL
Both arms or both legs	400–800 g	800 mL
Trunk	1600 g	2,000 mL
Groin and genitalia	60–100 g	400 mL

These amounts are usually suitable for an adult for twice daily application for 1 month of emollient. It is good practice to either use a pump product or to decant from the pot/tube (using a clean spoon) to prevent microbial contamination of the remaining emollient.

Expiry In Hertfordshire we suggest that if an emollient pack is unopened then the expiry remains as listed on the pack. Once opened there is a **3 month shelf life**. There is no clear data to support a shortened shelf life once opened, but because of the potential for microbial contamination it is helpful to have an agreed cut off time in place. It is good practice to label emollient products at the time of opening in care homes with an expiry 3 months after opening. CQC support this recommendation.

Safety It is important to counsel patients about the MHRA alert that states “There is a risk of severe and fatal burns with all emollients. This applies to all emollient, whether they contain paraffin or not. Advise patients who use these products not to smoke or go near naked flames, and warn about the easy ignition of clothing, bedding, dressings, and other fabric that have dried residue of an emollient product on them.” The MHRA has produced resources to promote awareness of the risk and to support safe use - <https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/emollients-and-risk-of-severe-and-fatal-burns-new-resources-available>

Patients on Oxygen - read coding in notes about oxygen use is recommended, they must use a paraffin free emollient: <https://www.prescrip.info/media/1268/b49-emollients-20.pdf>

Emollient Guidelines

(Prescribing is only recommended for managing diagnosed skin conditions requiring regular emollient use; recommend purchase OTC otherwise)

[HVCCG OTC Policy](#)

[ENHCCG OTC Policy](#)

Intervention and When to use	Order of choice	Product	Additional information
Washing and moisturising for normal skin		Patients own skin care regime.	Unless there are medical needs, the patient should simply be educated on the benefit of good skin hygiene and regular emollients
Washing for frail skin including ulcer care	Soap substitute	Epimax original cream or ZeroAQS or Zerocream or Emulsifying ointment or Dermol 500	Emulsifying ointment is greasier, so may be a slip hazard in showers and baths. It should be rinsed off well. Avoid use in patients sensitive to SLS. Dermol 500 used for infected skin and usually short-term, long term use >4 weeks only after specialist advice
Moisturising for frail skin including ulcer care	Emollient Creams 1 st choice	Epimax original cream (similar to Diprobase) or Epimax Isomol gel (similar to Doublebase)	One product may be used as a soap substitute & an emollient. Creams more acceptable to some patients as less oily If tolerated, ointments may be more effective
	Emollient Creams 2 nd choice	Zerocream or Epimax ExCetra Cream (similar to Cetraben) or Doublebase gel	2 nd choice due to higher costs.
	Emollient ointments (may be 1 st choice)	Liquid paraffin/White soft paraffin (50/50) Or Emulsifying ointment Epimax Paraffin-Free ointment	No excipients, useful under bandaging regimes, but may reduce compression and can affect integrity of latex/cotton Note MHRA alert on fire hazard Paraffin-free emollients are higher cost. Consider only if fire-risk is a significant issue post risk-assessment
	Special circumstances (wash &/or emollient)	Dermamist 10% spray Dermol 500	Could be useful if the only reason a patient cannot perform their own skin care is because they cannot reach their limb, Stand on a towel when using to reduce risk of slipping Specialists may request use, because it contains a bacteriostatic agent, benzalkonium chloride. Useful as part of the management of secondary skin infection. Used for flare ups and to prevent infections in conditions prone to infection.
Managing cracked or hyperkeratotic skin	1 st	Balneum Cream	5% urea and ceramide, so good if very dry/hyperkeratotic skin
	2 nd	Flexitol 10% urea	

Appendix 1 – Emollients costing less than £5 per 500g /500ml

Product Name	Formulation	Pack Size	Price *	Lipid profile similar to.....(NB excipients may differ)	Comments
Epimax Original Cream (previously Epimax Cream)	Cream	500g	£2.49	Diprobace Cream ZeroAQS Oilatium Cream	
Epimax Isomol Gel (previously Isomol gel)	Gel	500g	£2.92	Doublebase Gel Myribase Gel Aproderm Gel Zerodouble Gel HypoBase Gel	
Epimax ExCetra Cream (previously ExCetra Cream)	Cream	500g	£2.95	Cetraben Cream	
Epimax Ointment	Ointment	500g	£2.99	Cetraben Ointment Epaderm Ointment Zeroderm Ointment	Greasy - please consider fire risk
Epimax Oatmeal cream	Cream	500g	£2.99		
ZeroAQS	Cream	500g	£3.29	Epimax Original Cream (previously Epimax Cream) Diprobace Cream Oilatium Cream	Contains alcohol based stabilisers / drying
Aquaderm liquid paraffin/WSP	Ointment	500g	£3.49	Fifty:50	Greasy - please consider fire risk
Fifty:50	Ointment	500g	£3.66	Liquid paraffin/WSP	Greasy - please consider fire risk
AproDerm	Ointment	500g	£3.95	Diprobace Ointment	Greasy - please consider fire risk
AproDerm	Gel	500g	£3.99	Epimax Isomol Gel (previously Isomol Gel) Doublebase Gel Zerodouble Gel Myribase Gel HypoBase Gel	
Aquaderm aqueous	Cream	500g	£3.99		
Aquamax	Cream	500g	£3.99		
ExoCream	Cream	500g	£3.99	E45 Zerocream	
ZeroCream	Cream	500g	£4.08	E45 Cream ExoCream	Has been 1 st choice product in West Herts in the past so widely used locally
Zeroderm	Ointment	500g	£4.10	Epimax Ointment Cetraben Ointment Epaderm Ointment	Greasy - please consider fire risk
Aquaderm Hydrous Ointment	Cream	500g	£4.15		
Emcrem	Cream	500g	£4.25	Epimax Original Cream (previously Epimax Cream) Diprobace Cream Oilatium Cream	
Emulsifying Ointment	Ointment	500g	£4.28		Avoid use in patients sensitive to SLS. Flammable.
Aquaderm Cetomacrogol	Cream	500g	£4.29		
Aqueous Cream!	Cream	500g	£4.30		! Not recommended as a wash or leave on product as contains 1% SLS, which dries the skin over time. Avoid use.
Liquid Paraffin/WSP	Ointment	500g	£4.57	Fifty:50	Greasy - please consider fire risk
MyriBase	Gel	500g	£4.66	Epimax Isomol Gel (previously Isomol gel) Doublebase Gel Zerodouble Gel Aproderm Gel HypoBase Gel	
Zerodouble	Gel	500g	£4.90	Epimax Isomol gel Doublebase Gel Myribase Gel Aproderm Gel	
Hydromol	Ointment	500g	£4.92	Epaderm Ointment	Greasy - please consider fire risk
AproDerm Emollient	Cream	500g	£4.95	Epimax Original Cream (previously Epimax Cream) ZeroAQS	
Epimax Paraffin-Free Ointment	Ointment	500g	£4.99		Consider only if fire-risk is a significant issue post risk-assessment. See MHRA alert (link on page 1)

Price correct MIMS on-line accessed 14/11/18 and Drug Tariff Nov 2018

Prices in green are recommended as good quality and one of the cheapest available for their type

Products in red are equivalent but more costly >£5 per 500g

Version	Version 3.0 (HMMC October 2020) MHRA update on emollients and risk of fatal burns. Previous version 2.0 (HMMC July 2020) – updates on change in product names for Epimax brands. Previous version 1.3 (HMMC - December 2018).
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Date ratified	June 2017 HMMC, published Sept 17; Feb 18 HMMC published June 18; Dec 18 HMMC published March 2019; July 2020 HMMC published July 2020; Oct 2020 HMMC.
Review date	October 2022