

Genital Skin Care

Genital skin care

To help your genital skin become healthier:

- **Do** not use an emollient (except soft white paraffin alone) to wash your genitals.
- **Do** wear cotton underwear, but nothing too tight at night (ideally nothing at all).
- **Do** choose non-scented, non-perfumed lubricants.
- **Do** shower rather than bathe if possible – in a bath you are sitting in all the bath products. If you want a bath, use lukewarm water, wash your skin with an emollient only, wash your hair at the end of the bath and rinse off your genitals with water and emollient. Limit baths to 'treat' time only.
- **Don't** wash your genitals with foaming products – no soaps, shower gels or bubble bath products.
- **Don't** apply perfumed products to your genitals – no baby wipes, feminine washes, douches, perfumed toilet tissues, sprays or perfumed lubricants.
- **Don't** wash too much – it irritates the genital skin. Just use your hands to wash the genital area.
- **Don't** have the water too hot as it dries the skin out – try to have lukewarm showers.
- **Don't** rub the skin dry, pat it dry with a towel instead.

What are emollients?

Emollients are skin friendly moisturisers which are recommended for skin conditions. They soothe and protect the skin, helping to reduce itchiness, soreness and irritation.

The emollients in this leaflet are available on prescription from your GP, but can also be bought over the counter and from online pharmacies without a prescription.

Types of emollients

Different products suit different people and you may need to try a few before finding one that suits you.

Soap substitutes

Emollients can be used to wash with instead of soap or shower gels. They do not foam so may take a little while to get used to but they effectively clean the skin without drying it out.

Ointments

Ointments hold water in the skin and repair its protective barrier. They contain fewer preservatives and are useful for very dry skin. They can be applied every 6-8 hours. Ointments should not be used for weeping eczema. They are thick and greasy and some people find them easier to apply at bedtime rather than during the day.

Diprobase® ointment
50% white soft paraffin
Emolin® spray
*Contains preservative

Hydromol® ointment
White soft paraffin BP
*Epaderm® ointment

Zeroderm® ointment
Yellow soft paraffin
*Unguentum®

Creams

Creams feel light and cool on the skin, they are relatively easy to spread over sore and weeping skin and are non-greasy. Many people prefer them to ointment, particularly for daytime use. Creams contain preservatives which can cause sensitivity in some people. They should be used liberally and applied frequently (every 3-4 hours) to effectively repair the skin barrier and stop it drying out.

Cetraben® emollient cream
Dibrobase® cream

Hydromol® cream
Dermol® cream (anti-microbial)

Epaderm® cream
Unguentum®

Any there any precautions I need to take when using emollients?

There have been reports that paraffin-based emollients, regardless of paraffin concentration, have been associated with severe and fatal burns. Tests have also highlighted that other paraffin-free products can have a fire accelerant effect.

The emollient products are not flammable themselves but can act as an accelerant, increasing the speed of ignition and intensity of the fire when fabric with residue dried on it is ignited.

When using emollients:

You should not smoke **or** go near naked flames because clothing or other fabrics such as bedding that have been in contact with an emollient or emollient-treated skin can rapidly ignite.

You should be aware that washing clothing or fabric at a high temperature may reduce emollient build-up but **not** totally remove it.

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