

## Bath oil and shower preparations – information for patients

The NHS is asking GPs not to prescribe bath oils and shower preparations to any new patients, and to review the prescriptions of patients who currently receive these items, with the aim of stopping prescribing. This is because a study has shown that using these preparations does not make any difference to the symptoms of eczema and therefore prescribing these items is not a good use of NHS resources.

### How have bath and shower preparations been shown to be ineffective?

The amount of moisturiser left on the skin from using these preparations is much less than if oils, moisturisers or ointments are put straight on the skin. Relying on bath and shower products leads to under-treatment of dry skin conditions.

### Are there any risks in using bath and shower preparations?

- Some of the agents used in these products can potentially cause the skin to be more sensitive, which can lead to a worsening of symptoms.
- Bath and shower preparations leave a greasy residue on the bath and shower, making the area slippery and greatly increasing the risk of falls.

### Which bath and shower preparations are affected?

Moisturising bath and shower preparations: Bath oils that are poured into the bath water, and shower emollients which can be used to wash the body. Common brands include Oilatum® and Aveeno®.

### Are anti-bacterial washing preparations (e.g. Dermal®) also included?

These items should be restricted to short-term use only for when skin is infected. They should **not** be on your list of repeat medications.

### What options are available in place of these bath and shower preparations?

- It is extremely important to avoid soap and to regularly use a leave-on moisturiser (emollient), and these can also be used as a soap substitute. Mix a small amount (about a teaspoonful) of emollient in the palm of your hand with a little warm water and spread it over damp or dry skin. Rinse and pat the skin dry, being careful not to rub it.
- The soap substitutes can be used for handwashing, showering or in the bath. They will not foam like normal soap but are just as effective as cleaning the skin.
- Emollients carry a fire risk associated with the build-up of residue on clothing, bedding and dressings. The advice is not to smoke or go near naked flames, due to risk of severe or fatal burns from fabric igniting. This risk applies to all paraffin-based emollients, and cannot be excluded from paraffin-free products.

### What if I still wish to continue using my usual bath or shower preparation?

As these items do not require a prescription, they are readily available to be purchased from pharmacies, supermarkets and online retailers.

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