



How to maximise the benefits of your emollient

Emollients make the skin feel more comfortable, but are often underused. Here are some practical tips to make using your emollient as quick and effective as possible.



Which product?

The best emollients are the ones that work well for you and that you like using, because you are more likely to use them in the long run. Your healthcare professional may recommend a single product, or a combination of different ones depending on the time of the day

(e.g. an ointment at night and a cream during the day) or situation (e.g. a product to use in the shower).

How often?

This will depend on the type of emollient you have. An ointment is thicker and is usually only applied once or twice a day

whereas a cream will usually need to be applied more often, sometimes around 3-4 times a day. A lotion will need to be reapplied every 2–3 hours. This is because the higher the water content of the product, the more frequently it needs to be applied.

When I should apply them?

Whatever your skin type, applying your emollient before bed will ensure you get optimum hydration from your product. You should apply them as often as directed by the instructions for use or your healthcare professional. You will also need to reapply your emollient every time you wash.

How to apply

Your emollient should be applied gently and smoothly in the direction of your hair growth as this helps to prevent the hair follicles getting blocked and infected (known as folliculitis). Remember to wash and dry your hands before applying, and ideally use a product with a pump dispenser so you don't contaminate the emollient by putting your hand inside. If you don't have a pump dispenser, use a clean spoon or spatula to remove emollient from the pot or tub.

Leave to soak

Once applied, you should leave your emollient to soak into the skin before applying your compression garment. This is to ensure your skin gets the maximum benefit from the product, and avoids the product being wiped away or absorbed by your garment. It also

helps to ensure that the fibres of your compression garment are not damaged by the ingredients in your emollient, and that it is easier to apply as it won't stick.

Keep away from fire

All emollients are flammable, so keep away from fire, flames and cigarettes when using all types of emollients (both paraffin-based and paraffin-free). Dressings, hosiery, clothing and bedding that have been in contact with an emollient can easily catch fire. Clothing washable compression garments and bed linen should be washed regularly for this reason.

Slip hazard

Be careful not to slip when using emollients in a bath or shower, or on a tiled floor. Protect the floor with a non-slip mat, towel or sheet. Wear protective gloves, wash your bath or shower afterwards with hot water and washing-up liquid, then dry with a kitchen towel.

Try a different product

To get results you need to use your emollient regularly, as directed. If you have been doing so and are not seeing an improvement in your skin, it may be worth speaking to your healthcare professional and trying a new product.

Remember the rest of your limb care routine

Caring for your skin with an emollient is only part of your limb care; remember wearing your compression is the key factor in improving your skin health. ➡