MANAGEMENT OF SENSITIVE DRY SKIN CONDITIONS

Many skin problems such as Eczema, Dermatitis and Psoriasis cause excessively dry skin, which sometimes become scaly and itchy. Almost all dry skin conditions will benefit from the careful use of moisturisers (emollients), which can be applied directly to the skin or mixed in bath water. The greasier the moisturiser the better for most dry skin conditions. However some people find very greasy moisturisers messy. Some people prefer to use a greasier moisturiser at home and over the weekend and use a lighter moisturiser, which may be more cosmetically acceptable, at work and when out socially.

MOISTURISERS:

For moisturisers to work properly and relieve itch, they need to be applied generously and frequently. For people suffering from hand eczema or dermatitis, moisturiser should be applied every hour to the hands and also after washing. If you suffer from generalised dry skin all over your body you need to moisturise at least twice a day and also after baths or showers.

Adequate quantities of moisturisers need to be prescribed. If you are applying a moisturiser all over the body twice a day then you would need approximately 400gms of moisturisers in a week for an adult, or 400gms of moisturiser every two weeks for a child. Moisturisers should be fragrance free, perfume free, hypo-allergic and cheap so that they can be used frequently and generously. Moisturisers should never be put on acne prone skin.

Below is a list of recommended moisturisers graded according to how greasy they are.

Some people like to get small samples (100 g) of various different moisturisers to try them out and see how they feel. By and large the greasiest moisturiser that can be tolerated is the best.
Thick & Greasy: Emulsifying ointment (100g + 500g, available on the Medical Card).

White soft paraffin (100g + 500g).

Liquid paraffin/white soft paraffin in equal parts (Paraffin Gel) (500g)

Diprobase Ointment (50g)

Epaderm (only available in the UK and Northern Ireland). 125g, 500g.

Eucerin Lotion 10% (250ml)

Hydrous ointment (500g).

Neutrogena dermatological hand cream (unscented).

Aveeno Daily moisturising lotion with colloidal oatmeal (200ml, 354ml))

Vaseline Intensive Rescue Moisture Locking Lotion (200ml, 400ml)

Oilatum Natural Repair Cream

Light & Creamy: Diprobase cream (50g or 500g pump).

Greasy moisturisers (e.g. emulsifying ointment) are generally better tolerated on the body but sometimes people prefer to use less greasy moisturiser on the face such as Diprobase. This is also good for babies’ bottoms during nappy changes.

Silcocks Base (100g + 500g available on the Medical Card) is often promoted as a moisturiser. However, it is a cooling cream used to cool down the skin in conditions such as sunburn or facial flushing. Zinc and castor oil (100g + 500g) is a good lubricant and barrier for nappy rash and itchy bottoms.

When applying moisturisers to the body, the ointment should be always rubbed downwards gently in the direction of the hairs, as you would stroke a cat, going with the fur. Rubbing upwards against the hairs can irritate the skin and cause low-grade infection in the hair roots (folliculitis). Some people find that placing a thick moisturiser such as emulsifying ointment on a radiator, windowsill or...
in the hot press keeps it softer and easier to apply. When moisturisers are used liberally, people with dry skin conditions often need less prescription medication such as anti itch tablets or topical steroids.

Emollients with the same generic name can be manufactured by different companies. You may find a variation from one company’s ointment to another’s. Bonfields and Ovelle are Irish Companies that produce high quality emollients.

**Bath emollients:**

Oilatum do a range of bath emollients which easily dissolve in water and are a simple way of moisturising the skin. **Nothing** else should be added to the bath water, such as bubble baths, “Baby Bath”, “T–tree oil”etc. Below is a list of bath emollients with the usual indications.

**Oilatum bath emollient:** 20ml in a bath is suitable for adults (comes in bottles of 100,250 and 500ml).

**Oilatum Plus Bath Emollient:** 20 ml in a bath is suitable for adults when there skin is infected.

**Oilatum Junior Bath Emollient:** 10 ml in a bath is suitable for children.

**Oilatum Junior Flare – up Bath Emollient:** 10 ml in a bath is suitable for children with infected eczema or

**Emulsiderm Emollient (Dermal):** (300ml bottle) –30ml in a bath for an adult, 10-20ml in a child’s bath.

Alternatively two dessertspoons full of **emulsifying ointment** can be added to two pints of boiling water and beaten with a fork or whisk until all lumpiness has gone and a creamy liquid remains. This can be poured into a warm bath and mixed thoroughly to provide a cheap bath emollient that is available on the medical card.

Bath mats should be used to avoid slipping in the bath when using bath emollients.

**Psoriderm Bath Emulsion** 200ml (available on the medical card) useful for psoriasis.
**Soap substitutes:**

It is important that people with dry skin conditions do **not** use soaps or shampoos, as this will dry out the skin even further. *Elave Wash* or *Aveno Daily Moisturising Body Wash* are good soap free washes that can be used for hand, body and hair washing in the bath or shower. *Elave Shampoo* is **safe for hair washing.**

Alternatively, *Aqueous Cream (100g or 500 g)* can be used as a soap substitute by gently massaging a small amount of it on to the skin and washing off with warm water. This can be used for hand washing or for showering. This is a cheap alternative as a soap substitute and is available on the medical card.