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## Did you know that non-healing wounds of the leg and foot are one of the UK's biggest health challenges?

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Look out for legs or feet with these signs:

- Swelling
- Tired, throbbing and painful legs
- Redness and skin marks from clothing
- Cramp or pain after walking
- Tingling sensation
- Dry, itchy and scaly skin
- Reddish or brown staining patches of skin between the knee and ankle, which can often in the early stages feel hot, painful and can be misdiagnosed as infection
- Raised veins in the lower leg (varicose veins)
- Thread veins – these small veins are present in everyone but are not normally visible until they expand and show through the skin
- Hard skin, cracks or fissures on the heel
- Sores and knocks that are not healing

The above signs are not normal

Emollients are non-cosmetic moisturisers which come in the form of creams, ointments, lotions and gels. Emollients help skin to feel more comfortable and less itchy. They keep the skin moist and flexible, helping to prevent cracks.

One of the most important elements in managing all types of eczema is to keep the skin soft and supple by frequent and generous use of emollients.

Emollients are available as creams, ointments and lotions, any or all of which might be suitable to use at different times, depending on whether a person's eczema reacts to a specific ingredient or ingredients in an emollient.

Creams contain a mixture of fat and water and feel light and cool to the skin. For this reason many people with eczema prefer creams for day time use. All creams contain preservatives and people can become sensitive to them, although this is not common.

Ointments do not contain preservatives. Ointments can be very greasy and some people find them cosmetically unacceptable. However, because they are very effective at holding water in the skin, they are useful for very dry and thickened skin. Ointments should not be used on weeping eczema – use a cream or lotion instead.

Lotions contain more water and less fat than creams, but are not very effective at moisturising the skin. However, they are useful for hairy areas of the body.

Used every day, emollients may be all you need to keep mild to moderate eczema under control.

### Soap Substitutes

Soap is very drying to the skin and is best avoided by people with eczema. The hands are particularly at risk, as they are washed more frequently. Liquid soaps/cleansers and perfumed products should also be avoided as they tend to irritate skin with eczema.

Emollient soap substitutes do not foam but are just as effective at cleaning the skin as soap. Soap substitutes can either be applied before bathing, showering or washing, or while in the water.

Everyone can benefit from substituting a cream for soap to wash in the shower

### Bath Oils

Bubble baths are extremely drying and potentially irritating to people with eczema. A daily bath removes dirt and skin debris which could cause infection. There is a range of emollient bath oils available, which can also be used in the shower, either on a sponge, or applied all over the body before showering off.

### How are emollients applied and when?

- Apply emollients after bathing, while water is still trapped in the skin for extra hydration.
- Use liberally and frequently – at least three times a day.
- Apply gently in the direction of the hair growth. Never rub up and down vigorously as this could trigger itching, block hair follicles or create more heat in the skin.

### Which emollient should I use?

Finding the right emollient is a matter of trial and error, so the best emollient is the one you or your child prefers to use.

Your pharmacist should be able to advise you on the different products you can purchase.