



Emollients - Information for Schools – October 2020

The Covid-19 guidance advises that enhanced hand hygiene, washing our hands more frequently, is one of the main ways to prevent the spread of Covid-19 – ‘hands, face, space’. However, frequent handwashing can cause dry and irritated skin – contact irritant dermatitis. If a child suffers from contact irritant dermatitis due to handwashing they may need an emollient (moisturiser).

Emollients are not classed as medicines, and as such, schools should not consider them as part of the ‘Medicines in schools’ policy. Emollients (moisturisers), when used for dry, irritated skin on hands due to enhanced hand hygiene measures do not need to be prescribed by a doctor/General Practice. Emollients are readily available, to purchase, in supermarkets and community pharmacies.

Parents/guardians should be advised to purchase a suitable product, as detailed in the parent/guardian information leaflet.

Parents/guardians should purchase a small tube of suitable emollient, 50g-150g in size. Pots and tubs are not suitable for school due to the risk of contamination.

Parents/guardians should advise the child of the quantity of emollient to apply – see parent/guardian information leaflet.

The child should keep their emollient in their draw/tray/school bag, as appropriate.

The emollient should be applied as often as possible after handwashing – see parent/guardian leaflet for full advice.

Children should apply their own emollient, where possible. Children in Year 1 and Reception may need *supervision* in applying but still should be expected to apply themselves. If a child is unable to apply the emollient themselves, due to additional needs, this should be noted in their healthcare plan. Young children attending a pre-school setting and requiring emollient applying would fall under the same procedures used within the setting to administer sunscreen; it would be expected that these procedures form part of the setting’s standard operating risk assessments.

Schools should ask the parent/guardian to sign a consent form to allow their child to bring an emollient to school – see suggested consent form. The consent form includes the need for the emollient to be used ‘sensibly’ and the right for the school to confiscate the emollient if the child uses it inappropriately. The school should discuss the reason for confiscation with the parent/guardian and decide if it is appropriate for the child to have an emollient in school.

Emollients do carry a fire risk and parents/guardians should be made aware of this – by signposting them to the parent/guardian leaflet – but this is not considered to be

high risk in a school setting, no more than the fire risk associated with alcohol hand-gels.

This advice does not apply to chronic/long-term dry skin conditions, for example, atopic eczema and psoriasis, where the child's condition should be under the care of the GP and may require stronger products that must be prescribed.

Parents/guardians should be directed to their local community pharmacy for further advice on emollients/contact irritant dermatitis if needed.