NHS
Kent and Medway

Position statement on Bath and Shower preparations / additives

Bath and shower products SHOULD NOT BE ROUTINELY PRESCRIBED. Do not initiate bath and shower preparations for any new patient; prescribe only if no other item or intervention is clinically appropriate or available; deprescribe in patients currently prescribed this medicine or switch patients to an alternative "leave-on" or "soap substitute" emollient in line with the NHS items not for routine prescribing in primary care guidance.

They are no longer considered an essential component of total emollient therapy, as the amount of bath additives deposited on the skin is lower than with directly applied emollient creams or ointments, and therefore show no clinical benefit when added to standard eczema care in children. In line with these findings and recommendations from the BATHE Study, the latest update to NICE CG57 recommends clinicians to **not offer emollient bath additives** to children with atopic eczema.

Background

Using "leave-on" emollient as a soap substitute - many standard emollients can be used in this way e.g. by applying it to the skin before showering then rinsing it off. Alternatively, 1-2 tablespoons of any ointment (except 50:50) can be dissolved in some hot water and added into bath water, as a bath additive. [*Note: Bath products will coat the bath, making it slippery, and patients should be warned to take extra care*].

Savings

In England and Wales, the annual spend on emollients (including bath and shower emollients) is over £95.4 million. Review of emollient prescribing could lead to an annual cost saving across England and Wales of approximately £24.4 million. This equates to £39,327 per 100,000 patients - national cost savings (based on NHSBSA ISP data August to October 2019)

Self-Care

Patients with dry skin not related to a dermatological condition should be encouraged to purchase over the counter (OTC).

Recommendation

NHS England guidance for items which should not be routinely prescribed in Primary Care Policy Guidance (August 2023) states to substitute bath and shower preparations for dry and pruritic skin conditions with 'leave on' emollients. This information supersedes the NHS England consultation of 2019.

References:

- NHS England » Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: policy guidance
- https://cks.nice.org.uk/eczema-atopic#!prescribinginfosub:1
- 244. Bath and shower emollients 2.0 (prescqipp.info)

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