

Moisturisers

CATEGORY:

Treatments

WHY:

Moisturisers help manage skin conditions that cause itch, dryness, and scaling eg, eczema, psoriasis

WHAT:

Moisturisers contain ingredients that soothe and smooth skin; draw water into the upper layer of skin; and protect against moisture loss and irritants

WHO:

Anyone can use moisturisers, including children and people with sensitive skin; choose a moisturiser you like and that does not cause irritation or allergies

WHERE:

Apply to skin all over the body; different areas of skin may need a different kind of moisturiser depending on dryness

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE —



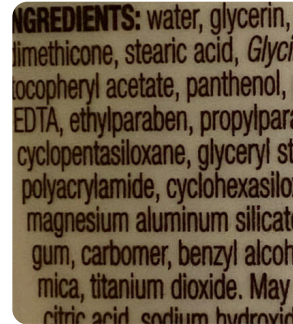
A sample pack — to try at home and select the moisturiser you like best



Pack sizes vary — when you find one you like, get a large pack and use liberally



Moisturisers range in consistency from light to greasy



If you know you have an allergy, check the label for the ingredient list



Very dry skin due to ichthyosis — generous amounts of moisturiser are needed



Eczema — moisturisers help to reduce the need for steroid creams

What is it?

Moisturisers are products you apply to your skin to keep it hydrated and healthy so that it can act as a barrier between your body and the outside world.

They are commonly used to relieve dryness and itching, and prevent flare-ups of certain skin conditions eg, eczema.

Many moisturisers are available to buy without a prescription.

Moisturisers are sometimes also called 'emollients', although technically emollients are a type of ingredient used in moisturisers.

Moisturisers

WHO SHOULD USE THEM —

Moisturisers are used to treat many skin conditions, especially those that cause dryness, itch, and scaling eg, **eczema**, **psoriasis**, **dermatitis**, and ichthyosis.

They are safe for anyone to use, including children and people with sensitive skin. You may need to choose a moisturiser carefully based on allergies or sensitivities.

HOW THEY WORK —

Moisturisers contain at least one of the following types of ingredients:

- **Emollients** eg, lanolin — soften and smooth skin by filling cracks in the top layer
- **Occlusives** eg, petroleum jelly, paraffin, mineral oil — form a barrier over skin to prevent moisture loss and protect against irritants
- **Humectants** eg, glycerine, urea, hyaluronic acid — hydrate skin by attracting water into the top layer.

Some moisturisers also contain ingredients with antimicrobial (helps kill microbes/germs), anti-itch, or anti-inflammatory properties.

Moisturisers come in several forms:

- **Ointments** — greasy, thick, and highly moisturising; high oil and occlusive content
- **Creams** — less greasy than ointments; mix of oil and water
- **Lotions** — light and easy to spread; high water content
- **Gels** — very light, quickly absorbed, and easy to rub in; highest water content.

Very dry skin may need an ointment, while less dry skin may only need a light moisturiser like a lotion.

HOW TO USE —

- Apply daily, even when your skin is not having a flare-up.
- Apply right after bathing for best results.
- Apply all over, not just on dry/inflamed skin. Different areas of skin may need a different kind of moisturiser depending on dryness.
- Use generously and **reapply as often as needed** to keep skin moisturised.
- Gently smooth over skin in the direction of hair growth to avoid clogging hair follicles.

If your moisturiser comes in a tub, use a **clean spatula or spoon** to scoop out the product instead of your fingers. This helps prevent bacteria from contaminating the moisturiser.

If you have been prescribed other skin products (eg, steroid cream), it is generally recommended to wait 20 to 30 minutes between applying each one — follow your healthcare provider's instructions.

Moisturisers can also be used instead of soap to wash your skin (except for white soft paraffin on its own), as regular soap can be harsh and drying.

SIDE EFFECTS AND RISKS —

- **Irritation** — burning/stinging can occur after applying due to sensitive skin or certain ingredients eg, sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS).
- **Allergy** — a rash can develop if you are allergic to an ingredient; switch products if this occurs. Allergy testing can be helpful.
- **Folliculitis and acne** — greasy moisturisers can clog and irritate pores.
- **Fire hazard** — paraffin-based moisturisers are flammable; keep away from open flames (eg, candles, cigarettes) and wash clothes/bedding exposed to paraffin.

OUTCOME —

Moisturisers are safe and effective for treating dry skin. While they do not cure skin conditions, they help manage symptoms and make your skin feel more comfortable.

For people with eczema, regular use of moisturisers can reduce flare-ups and decrease the need for topical steroid creams.



<https://dermnetnz.org/topics/emollients-and-moisturisers>

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