



## Further guidance and advice

[Emollient safety | If you smoke and use emollients, you could be putting yourself at risk. It's important to keep away from fire, flames and cigarettes when using... | By Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System | Facebook](#)

[Safe use of emollient skin creams to treat dry skin conditions - YouTube](#)

## Related risks

Being careful not to slip when using emollients in a bath or shower, or on a tiled floor. Protect the floor with a non-slip mat, towel, or sheet. Wear protective gloves, wash your bath or shower afterwards with hot water and washing-up liquid, then dry with a kitchen towel. Those people with an increased risk of falling increase their fire safety risk, especially if they live alone, unable to raise an emergency alarm, react to a smoke alarm or escape unaided.

## Advice to those affected

Keep away from fire, flames and cigarettes when using all types of emollients (both paraffin-based and paraffin-free). Washing fabrics at high temperatures may reduce the build-up of an emollient but does not remove it completely. Be aware where an individual uses home oxygen therapy, Oil free preparations should be used where there will be direct contact with oxygen, for example, on the face including nasal passages and lips, due to the risk associated with high pressure gases and oil-based products. Paraffin based products can also block nasal prongs as well as being a fire risk.

## What are emollients?

What are emollients? Emollient creams, ointments, sprays and body wash formulations are used by millions of people every day to help manage dry, itchy or scaly skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis and ichthyosis. They help prevent patches of inflammation and flare-ups of these conditions. Available from a pharmacy/supermarket without a prescription. If the skin condition is severe, following treatment at hospital



## What is the risk?

They may contain paraffin or other ingredients such as shea or cocoa butter, beeswax, lanolin, nut oil or mineral oils which can leave a flammable residue. Both paraffin and non-paraffin emollients can act as an accelerant when absorbed into clothing and exposed to naked flames or other heat sources. Emollients are not flammable in themselves. The risk occurs when they absorb into fabrics and are then exposed to naked flames or heat sources res

## Who is most at risk?

Over 65's who smoke and have reduced mobility are those most at risk and we would encourage and advise them, their families, and carers to be alert to the inherent fire risk and appropriate fire safety advice. Known fire risk factors involving portable heaters combine with human risk factors including increased age, fragility, reduced mobility, one room living, chronic skin conditions or wounds requiring regular emollient application and heaters being used to close to affected areas. They may be less likely to be able to regularly wash clothing, bedlinen or dressings affected by emollient application.

## What can we do?

Observe where people spend extended periods in a bed or armchair due to illness or impaired mobility. It is important to raise attention if they are smoking or using sources of heat and flame such as lighters, matches, electric/halogen heaters, gas hobs and candles.