NHS
Suffolk and
North East Essex

Emollients Prescribing Guidance in Primary care

Introduction

Emollients represent an average yearly spend in primary care of approximately £1.5m within Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (Jan '20-Dec '23)

A range of emollients are available for prescribing, and prescribing data indicates there a broad range of products are prescribed within SNEE. As a result, there is scope for practices to rationalise prescribing and deliver significant savings.

The Suffolk and North East Essex Formulary provides information on formulary choices of emollients to support the prescribing of appropriate products within primary care which can be found here.

This guidance provides clinicians information on three key areas where prescribing efficiencies can be achieved:

- Considerations of prescribing appropriately on the NHS
- Consideration for formulary choices
- Prescribing quantities.

Further information on identifying patients that can be reviewed to enable practice to prescribe products which are better value to the NHS while maintaining high quality care

1.Consideration for prescribing emollients

NHS England (NHSE) have guidance published on the conditions for which over the counter items should not be routinely prescribed in primary care and includes information on the prescribing of emollients (here).

The following criteria has been agreed locally on aspects where patients should be directed to purchase their emollients over the counter or have them prescribed on the NHS. Please note that this is not exhaustive and prescriber discretion should be applied on an individual basis where appropriate.

Considerations where OTC use will be appropriate

- Mild dry, itchy or scaly skin conditions
- Patients being managed solely in primary care for skin conditions where the following may apply:
    - Patients using emollients on a "as required" basis
    - Patients without a clear diagnosed skin condition.
    - Mild variant of long-term conditions e.g. eczema
    - Patient is using a small number of products to manage their condition and are stable
    - Patient using emollients without the need for frequent medical intervention to manage flare ups who do not meet the criteria listed below

Considerations for continuing prescribing

- Patients under active care of dermatology specialists
- Complex skin conditions

- Patient on multiple therapies to manage their skin condition
- Patients who have frequent/ active flare up of their skin conditions requiring supportive treatment e.g. steroids
- Patients who are not stable in the management of their skin condition
- Treating an adverse effect or symptom of a more complex illness
- individual patients where the prescriber considers that the patient's ability to self-care is compromised because of medical, mental health or significant social vulnerability to the extent that their health and/or wellbeing could be adversely affected if reliant on self-care.

Patients should be directed to their local pharmacy where an OTC purchase would be considered suitable. This will offer the pharmacy an opportunity to provide advice and support on the product they wish to purchase alongside the ability to provide further information to help them manage their condition.

Practices who have undertaken a review and have directed patient to OTC purchases may wish to consider informing the patient using the letter provided via AccuRx in Appendix 1. Practices are free to adapt the letter as needed.

2.Consideration for formulary choices

A range of products are available to prescribe on the NHS which can vary significant in price. The SNEE formulary lists products which are considered suitable for prescribing in primary care and can be found here

The choice of formulation is dependent on the presentation of the condition and information is available to support the prescribing of the most suitable vehicle (here)

Where an emollient is considered suitable for prescribing, SNEE recommend the use of Epimax range listed below:

- Epimax Original Cream
- Epimax Isomol Gel
- Epimax Ointment
- Epimax Ointment paraffin free
- Epimax Oatmeal Cream

Other products may be considered due to lack of efficacy, side effects or patient preference. In these cases, a range of other products on the formulary may be considered.

Patients who are on non-formulary emollients who have not tried the equivalent Epimax product should be considered for a change to an Epimax product . The table below provides examples of products considered equivalent to corresponding Epimax product.

Practices who have undertaken a review and have made changes in the prescribed product may wish to consider informing the patient using the letter provided via AccuRx in Appendix 2. Practices are free to adapt the letter as needed.

Product Category		Similar Products
Aveeno® Cream Colloidal oatmeal 1% 500ml	➢	Epimax® Oatmeal Cream 500ml
Aqueous cream 500g	➢	Epimax Original® Cream 500g
Cetaben® Cream 500g		
AproDerm® Emollient Cream 500g		
Diprobase® Cream 500g		
Zerobase® Cream 500g		
E45® Cream 500g		
Zerocream® Cream 500g		
Ultrabase® Cream 500g		
Epaderm® Cream 500g		
Oilatum® Cream 500g		
Oilatum® Junior Cream 500g		
Doublebase® Gel 500g	➢	Epimax Isomol® Gel 500g
Doublebase® Dayleve® Gel 500g		
HypoBase® Gel 500g		
MyriBase® Gel 500g		
Zerodouble® Gel 500g		
Ointment switch for patients in own home: for guidance on tub use in care homes please see formulary		
Cetaben Ointment 450g	➢	Epimax ointment 450g
Epaderm Ointment 500g		

Patients who have previously trialled Epimax unsuccessfully should not be considered for a change and should continue with their prescribed product.

Directions for use should include frequency of use and which body part to apply the product to where appropriate.

3.Prescribing quantities

Clinicians should ensure the quantity prescribed is suitable for the body part where the prodcut is used. This will help prevent waste, stockpiling and support the practice in tracking compliance to support in the review and management of their condition.

The table below provides guidance the on suitable quantities to prescribe for twice daily application for a period of 4 weeks. Please note that this does not apply to corticosteroid preparations.

Area of body	Creams and Ointments
Face	60-120g
Both hands	100-200g
Scalp	200-400g
Both arms or both legs	400-800g
Trunk	800g
Groins and genitalia	60-100g

Where reasonably possible practices should ensure the quantity prescribed matches the use case for the individual patient.

Practices who have undertaken a review and have made changes in the prescribed quantities may wish to consider informing the patient using the letter provided via AccuRx in Appendix 3. Practices are free to adapt the letter as needed.

Support for practices

A range of reports are available for practices to utilise which include the following:

- Patients prescribed emollients
- Patients using non-Epimax range emollients
- Patient who are a non- Epimax range product and have not tried an Epimax product previously
    - These patients would potentially be eligible for a change to an equivalent Epimax product
- Patients issued emollients less than 6 times per year
    - These patients would potentially be eligible for OTC purchase

Please contact your respective Alliance Medicines Management Pharmacy Technician for support in identifying patients.

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Appendix 1 Letter to patients directing to OTC purchase

Practice Letter head

Address

Tel:

Fax:

Private and confidential

«PatientFullName»

«PatientAddress»

Date as postmark NHS Number

Dear «PatientFullName»

Important information about your repeat prescription

In line with best clinical practice and local guidelines we regularly review the medicines we prescribe to check that we are doing so effectively. NHS England has advised that medicines used to treat minor health conditions should no longer be routinely prescribed as they are available to purchase over the counter at your local pharmacy. The prescribing team has reviewed your current treatment and removed the following item from your repeat prescription:

Item: (Medication Stopped and dose)

If you require additional information or guidance on the use of over-the-counter medications please speak to your local community pharmacy team.

If you have any queries or concerns regarding this change, please call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 08003896819 or email pals@snee.nhs.uk

Yours Sincerely

Add practice preference for this

(Copy of letter sent to care home manager) -delete if not relevant

NHS
Suffolk and
North East Essex

Appendix 2 Letter to patients switching to an Epimax product

Practice Letterhead
Address
Tel
Email

Private and confidential
<Patient Name>
<Patient Address>

<Today's date>

NHS no <NHS number>

Dear «PatientName»

Important information about your repeat prescription

In line with best clinical practice and local guidelines we regularly review the medicines we prescribe to check that we are using the most cost-effective medicines. Your practice has reviewed your current treatment and has made the following changes to your prescription.

From:

To:

Whilst the name of the emollient is different, the product will continue to treat your condition in the same way and is considered better value for money for the NHS.

Please continue to use any (enter old formulation) you have at home before requesting a new supply.

You should not experience any side effects from this change, however, should you experience any new side effects, please contact your GP.

Should you have any queries about this medication change please call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 08003896819 or email pals@snee.nhs.uk

Yours Sincerely

Add practice preference for this

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Appendix 3 Letter to patients advising on change of quantity.

Practice Letterhead
Address
Tel
Email

Private and confidential
<Patient Name>
<Patient Address>

<Today's date>

NHS no <NHS number>

Dear «PatientName»

Important information about your repeat prescription

In line with best clinical practice and local guidelines we regularly review the medicines we prescribe. We have reviewed the amount of emollient you're ordering and have adjusted the quantity to better match how it's being used and have updated your repeat prescription.

From:

To:

Should you have any queries about this change please call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 08003896819 or email pals@snee.nhs.uk

Yours Sincerely

Add practice preference for this

References

1. PrescQIPP Low priority prescribing https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/data-and-analysis/strategic-activity-reports/low-priority-prescribing/ last accessed 24/5/24
2. SNEE ICB Emollient formulary https://www.ipswichandeastsuffolkformulary.nhs.uk/chaptersSubDetails.asp?FormularyID=2834&FormularySectionID=13&SubSectionRef=13.02.01&SubSectionID=A100 last accessed 24/5/24
3. Policy guidance: conditions for which over the counter items should not be routinely prescribed in primary care NHSE https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/policy-guidance-conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed-in-primary-care/ last accessed 24/5/24
4. Skin conditions, management BNF https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summaries/skin-conditions-management/ last accessed 24/5/24