

Fire hazard warning: Emollients

[MHRA alert](#) informs that there is a risk of severe and fatal burns with all emollients.

The risk increases with:

- Use of greater amounts of emollient
- More frequent application
- Greater surface area of application

Emollients are not flammable when in their raw state or in the container. However, they can transfer from the skin onto clothing, bedding, dressings, and other fabric, leading to a build up over time. In the presence of a naked flame or ignition source, fabric may be easily ignited and the resulting fire burns more quickly and intensely (hotter) and is harder to extinguish than a clean fabric fire, reducing the time to act and leading to serious and fatal burns.



Reducing risk of serious injury or death from fire

Consider patients at increased risk:

- Smokers or being in close contact with smokers
- Patients with home oxygen
- Reduced mobility
- Age over 60 years

Regularly review patients' use of emollients. Share advice about the safe use of emollient products with patients, their families, carers, community teams (district nurse teams) and care home staff.

Record any advice given in patient's notes.

- [MHRA patient information leaflets](#)
- Advise not to smoke, cook or go near any naked flames or heat sources (gas, halogen, electric bar or open fire) whilst wearing clothing or dressings that have been in contact with emollients or emollient treated skin.
- If this is not possible, advise on measures to do so safely e.g., use safety lighters or e-cigarettes, remove long sleeved or loose clothing before cooking, put on a thick uncontaminated shirt, overalls, or apron, move chairs further away from the open fire or other heat sources.
- Smoking cessation advice, where applicable
- Change and wash clothes and bedding frequently to reduce the build-up of skin cream. However, washing even at high temperatures (60°C or higher) may not completely remove the risk.
- For complex cases, encourage patients (or a family member on their behalf) to [book a visit via the South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue website](#). Healthcare professionals can also use this website to refer patients for this service.

Report any fire incidents with emollients or other skin care products to the [Yellow Card Scheme](#).

Further information on fire hazard with emollients

<u>MHRA alert December 2018</u>	Original fire hazard alert on emollients.
<u>MHRA alert August 2020</u>	Updated fire hazard alert on emollients.
<u>South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue</u>	South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue fire hazard information.
<u>MHRA & NFCC fire safety leaflet</u>	Advice for healthcare professionals.

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