



Fact Sheet 5

How to Use an Emollient Bath Additive

You may see these products referred to in a number of ways; bath oil, bath emollient, bath additive. These terms all mean the same thing; emollient bath additives are products that when added to bath water, produce a moisturising effect on the skin.

There are other types of emollient bath additive products which are medicated. This means that they contain another active ingredient as well as the emollient, and are either antiseptic or anti-itch in nature. They should be used in the same way as a normal emollient bath additive.

Diluting the Product in the Bath

Bath additives are oil based, with most based on light liquid paraffin, although other oils can be used. The only other essential ingredient in an emollient bath additive is something to make the oil disperse in the water. Without this ingredient the oil would simply float on the surface. Different products contain different quantities of oil and the amount of oil used should be declared on the labelling. However, the amount of surfactant is not declared. Essentially, the only way to find an emollient bath additive that works for you is to try different brands.

Bath additives need to be diluted by about 5,000 times in bath water. This is achieved by adding 10ml to 50 litres of water in the bath, or 20ml to 100 litres of water. As a guide, 50 litres of water would be 10cm deep (4 inches) and 100 litres is about 20cm deep, (8 inches). Different products have different size caps which are used to measure out the bath additive. The most common cap size however is 7.5ml. This is why the instructions might say to use 2-3 capfuls.

Add the appropriate amount of bath additive to the water, either when the bath is filling, or at the end. Then swish the water around to ensure good distribution of the product. Generally, a slight milky-ness can be observed, and the more bath additive added, the more milky the water looks.

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Washing in the Bath

If you have dry skin, you should avoid using soap or detergent based products to wash with. The high pH of the products, (alkaline) produces a deteriorative effect on the skin. Wash the skin using the bath water, or an emollient based soap substitute. It is the surfactant products in emollient based products that provide the cleansing effect.

How Long Should the Bathing Process Take?

To obtain most benefit from using an emollient bath additive, the bath should last for at least 10 minutes. After 20 minutes, maximum effect has been reached. In this time, half of the oil added to the water will have been absorbed into the skin.

After a Bath?

There are two key events at the end of the bathing process. Firstly, the skin will be soft and receptive to other treatments, so this is a good time to apply moisturising creams and treatment products. Pat the skin dry gently before applying the products.

Secondly, it is important to clean around the bath with a proprietary cleaner. If this is not done, the emollient oils can build up into an unsightly coating. This cannot be prevented. After cleaning the bath, rinse the cleaning products away to ensure no residue is left in the bath.

Take Care

Oil and water when combined have the effect of reducing friction, and emollient bath additives will have this effect. To reduce the chance of slipping in the bath a non slip surface such as a non slip mat can help. But these will need to be cleaned regularly to prevent a build up of oil on their surface which can in turn make the non slip mat slippery.

All bath additive products will carry a warning about taking care in the bath in order to avoid slipping. Please do pay special attention to these warnings.

Baby Baths

Babies often have dry skin conditions that respond well to emollient bathing. Baby baths however contain very small quantities of water so only a few drops of bath additive are needed.

Once baby is big enough to be transferred to an adult size bath, there are very good seats that can be used in the bath that keep the baby upright and prevent slipping.

Information written and supplied by Genus Pharmaceuticals Ltd distributors of the Cetraben range including Cetraben Emollient Bath Additive.

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