

Prescribing of sunscreen preparations

Basildon and Brentwood CCG and Thurrock CCG does not support the prescribing of sunscreen preparations for routine use for the protection against the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation.

Several sunscreen products are approved by the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) for prescribing on an FP10 prescription for very specific medical conditions.

These preparations are regarded as drugs when prescribed for skin protection against ultraviolet radiation in abnormal cutaneous photosensitivity resulting from genetic disorders or photodermatoses, including vitiligo and those resulting from radiotherapy or chronic or recurrent herpes simplex labialis. Preparations with SPF less than 30 should not normally be prescribed.

Sunscreen preparations should not be prescribed on an NHS prescription for any other conditions. For routine sun protection patients should be advised to self-purchase sunscreen preparations with dual protection against UVB and UVA rays with an SPF value minimum of 30

Advisory sunscreen because of risk of skin cancer is not a qualifying condition and should be regarded as routine sun protection.

Advise all patients on the following:

- Skin should be protected with clothing (hat, t-shirt sunglasses) and exposure to sun between 11am and 3pm minimised by staying in the shade. Babies and young children should be kept out of direct sunlight.
- UVB is mainly responsible for sunburn and has strong links to malignant melanoma and basal cell carcinoma. SPF indicates the level of protection a product gives to UVB but not UVA.
- UVA is associated with skin ageing and can also cause skin cancer. Check preparations for a UVA seal - a logo with 'UVA' inside a circle -which indicates that a product meets the EU recommendation for sun creams to offer a UVA protection factor equivalent to at least a third of their SPF.
- Approximately 30 mL sunscreen is required to cover the average body of an adult.
- Sunscreen should be applied 15-30minutes before sun exposure. Reapply every two hours and immediately after swimming, perspiring and towel drying or if it has rubbed off.
- "Once a day" products can be accidentally removed by water, sweating, abrasion and by towel drying, all of which reduce effectiveness. It is recommended by the British Association of Dermatologists that these products are also re-applied every two hours.

Providers commissioned to provide services on behalf of Thurrock CCG and Basildon and Brentwood CCG are reminded that they are required to follow the local joint formulary and prescribing guidance, or relevant Medicines Management agreement.

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