

## Prescribing of rubefacients is not supported

**Thurrock CCG, and Basildon and Brentwood CCG do not support the prescribing of rubefacients for long term treatment of soft-tissue disorders and topical pain relief due to low clinical effectiveness, and this position is supported by NHS England.**

Rubefacients are topical preparations that cause irritation and reddening of the skin due to increased blood flow. They act by counter-irritation. Pain, whether superficial or deep-seated, is relieved by any method that itself produces irritation of the skin. They may contain nicotinate compounds, salicylate compounds, essential oils and camphor. Examples include:

- Movelat Relief<sup>®</sup> cream / gel
- Diffiam<sup>®</sup> cream
- Radian-B<sup>®</sup> pain relief spray / muscle rub / muscle lotion
- Deep Heat<sup>®</sup> pain relief spray / heat rub / patch / roll on lotion
- Deep Freeze<sup>®</sup> pain relief cold spray / cold gel / patch / glide-on gel
- Ralgex<sup>®</sup> muscle rub cream

The BNF states '*The evidence available does not support the use of topical rubefacients in acute or chronic musculoskeletal pain.*'

### Recommendations

- Do not initiate rubefacients in any new patients
- All patients prescribed rubefacients should have their therapy reviewed, with a view to discontinue prescribing on FP10s
- Counsel patients to help them understand that using rubefacients are unlikely to help relieve their musculoskeletal pain and therefore they will not be prescribed on FP10
- Consider recommending or prescribing an effective alternative treatment if appropriate
- If these patients still wish to use a rubefacient they should be advised that they can be purchased as self-care over-the-counter (OTC) with the support of the community pharmacist

***N.B. topical NSAIDs and capsaicin cream are excluded from this position statement.***

This position is supported by NHS England as part of the items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care.

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.

<b>Position Statement No.</b>	52
<b>Title</b>	Prescribing of rubefacients is not supported
<b>References</b>	NHS England guidance on 'Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care' (June 2019): <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-v2.1.pdf">https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-v2.1.pdf</a>
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