



Newsletter supplement: Prescribing Silk Garments in Primary Care for Eczema

Summary

- ◆ Three brands of knitted silk garments are currently listed in the Drug Tariff; **Dermsilk**[®], **Dreamskin**[®], and **Skinnies**[®]. All three brands have a wide range of garments available in various sizes e.g. vests, pyjamas.
- ◆ These garments are relatively expensive and the available evidence to support their use is weak. Current evidence is from case studies and poor quality trials. ¹ Their use may be beneficial for a small number of patients in exceptional circumstances (see below) when all other options have been considered.
- ◆ Silk garments should only be prescribed by those who have expertise in managing patients with moderate/severe eczema and who have experience in dressing techniques e.g. dermatology consultants, dermatology specialist nurses and GPs with a special interest in eczema.
- ◆ Patients should be reviewed regularly to assess efficacy.

Silk garments should only be prescribed in the following circumstances

- ✓ The treatment of moderate or severe eczema in patients for whom standard therapy with emollients, topical steroids and occlusive dressings has failed to achieve control of the condition.
- ✓ Situations where wet wrapping with elasticated viscose stockinette garments has been unsuccessful or contraindicated (e.g. due to recurrent secondary infection).
- ✓ The management of severe pruritus in atopic patients which is poorly responsive to antihistamines and environmental manipulation.
- ✓ The management of pruritus which is causing sleep disturbance/impact on family life/missing school.



How Many Sets are Appropriate?



- Initially **only ONE SET** of garments should be prescribed to ensure fit and comfort.
- If effective, **then one further set** could be prescribed to allow washing. After washing according to the manufacturer's instructions, these garments are extremely quick-drying.
- Care should be taken to select correct item/size and size/product code should be clearly written on each prescription. **Waste occurs if incorrect sizes are prescribed /supplied** as often these garments are non-refundable.
- It is currently unclear how long garments will last, although manufacturers' websites state they can be washed repeatedly.
- For children: with care the garments will only need to be replaced when outgrown by the child, therefore they should not be added as "repeats".**

Action for Community Pharmacists



Pharmacy Staff Should

- Double-check size/item required with patient/carer **before** ordering
- Double-check with prescriber if seemingly inappropriate quantity or size has been prescribed for an individual patient - confusion can occur when selecting/printing from clinical system
- Clarify size with patient/carer **before** packs are opened.

Patient Information

- When used in combination with medical creams and ointments, care should be taken to ensure that the medication is fully absorbed into the skin **before** the silk clothing is worn.
- Silk garments are **not suitable** for use in direct contact with emollients used in 'wet wrapping techniques'.²
- Patients/carers have an important role in management – useful information can be found at:

<http://www.eczema.org/factsheets>

<http://www.patient.co.uk/health/atopic-eczema>

We acknowledge the help from the Regional Dermatology Expert Group in reviewing this supplement

References

- 1) UKMI Midlands Trent Medicines Information Service Silk Garments for Eczema/AtopicDermatitis June 2014 <http://www.midlandsmedicines.nhs.uk/filestore/SilkGarments.pdf>
- 2) BMA / RPSGB British National Formulary December 2014 https://www.medicinescomplete.com/mc/bnf/current/PHP9841-silk-clothing.htm?q=silk&t=search&ss=text&p=3#_hit

This newsletter has been produced for GP practice staff including Nurses, and Pharmacists by the Regional Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team. If you have any queries or require further information on the contents of this newsletter, please contact one of the Medicines Management pharmacists in your local HSCB office.

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