

MID AND SOUTH ESSEX MEDICINES OPTIMISATION COMMITTEE (MSEMOC)

RUBEFACIENTS (EXCLUDING TOPICAL NSAIDS AND CAPSAICIN CREAM) BLACK: NOT RECOMMENDED FOR PRESCRIBING IN PRIMARY, COMMUNITY OR SECONDARY CARE

Mid and South Essex CCGs do not support the prescribing of rubefacients for the treatment of soft-tissue disorders and topical pain relief due to limited evidence of clinical effectiveness. This position is supported by NHS England guidance on items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care.

Rubefacients are topical preparations that cause irritation and reddening of the skin due to increased blood flow. Rubefacients are used for the treatment of soft-tissue disorders and pain relief. Topical rubefacient preparations may contain nicotinate compounds, salicylate compounds, essential oils and camphor. Examples of rubefacients include:

- Movelat Cream / Gel and Movelat Relief Cream / Gel
- Diffiam Cream
- Radian B Pain Relief Spray / Muscle Rub / Muscle Lotion
- Deep Heat Spray / Rub
- Deep Freeze Cold Spray / Gel
- Ralgex Cream / Freeze Spray / Heat Spray

NHS England do not recommend the prescribing of rubefacients as part of the guidance on '*Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs*', and no routine exceptions have been identified.

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

[NICE](#) have issued the following "Do not do" recommendation: *Do not offer rubefacients for treating osteoarthritis.*

Recommendations:

- Do not initiate rubefacients for any new patient.
- All patients prescribed rubefacients should have their therapy reviewed, with a view to discontinuing prescribing.
- Counsel patients to help them understand that using rubefacients are unlikely to help relieve their musculoskeletal pain and therefore they will not be prescribed.
- Consider recommending or prescribing an effective alternative treatment if clinically appropriate.
- Patients that wish to continue using a rubefacient should be advised that they can be purchased as self-care over the counter with the support of the community pharmacist.

Topical NSAIDs and capsaicin cream are excluded from this position statement. Capsaicin cream in accordance with [NICE guidance for neuropathic pain](#) and [NICE guidance for osteoarthritis](#).

Providers commissioned to provide services on behalf of Mid and South Essex CCGs are reminded that they are required to follow the local joint formulary and prescribing guidance, as detailed in the medicines management service specification of their contract.

References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NHS England and NHS Improvement Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs (Version 2, June 2019): https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-v2.1.pdf ▪ PrescQIPP Bulletin 114 (October 2015): Rubefacients for the treatment of soft-tissue disorders and topical pain relief (DROP-List): https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-114-rubefacients-drop-list/ ▪ NICE Clinical Guideline CG177 'Osteoarthritis: care and management' (February 2014): https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG177
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