



Creams/Oils Fact Sheet

1. Emollients, creams, sprays, liquids or gels are safe to use in the effective treatment of a variety of skin conditions. However, risk exists when residue soaks into fabrics, bedding, clothing and bandages. Oxygen can react with oil-based creams and greases causing an ignition. It is recommended that fabrics/clothing/bedding are washed at the highest temperature to remove the accumulation of creams/oils and contaminants.
2. It is important not to touch, handle or operate cylinders/liquid oxygen systems when hands are contaminated with oil-based creams/oils as:
 - a. Could cause local ignition resulting in burns to you or others.
 - b. Increases risk to BOC operatives when filling cylinders/liquid systems.

3. Our recommendation would be to use water-based creams such as RoEezit® or K-Y Jelly but we recognise that this is not always possible, therefore if oil-based products need to be applied to the skin, the following action must be taken:
 - a. After applying cream/oil wash hands with soap and dry thoroughly.
 - b. If using alcohol gel, apply to hands and ensure it is massaged in well and allow for it to evaporate normally for approximately 2 – 3 minutes.
4. Patients who continue to smoke incur significant additional risks, as oxygen enriched bedding and clothing, which is impregnated with creams/oils are more flammable when smoking resumes. In recent tests, non-contaminated fabrics took an

average of 65 seconds to ignite. Those containing emollient residue, from both paraffin and paraffin-free creams, caught fire in less than 20 seconds. Similarly, being near to someone who is smoking or exposure to any open flame or other potential cause of ignition will carry the same risks eg cookers, candles, heaters or fires.

However, people should be aware that when using emollients, they can come into contact with fabrics, clothing, bedding or bandages which then dries leaving a flammable residue. The fabric can then be easily ignited with smoking materials such as matches and lighters, naked flames or other heat sources.

We are asking people who prescribe, dispense or apply these products to be aware that switching to a lower or paraffin-free emollient will not reduce the fire risk. Washing fabrics will reduce the risk but may not totally remove it.

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