

Wet wrapping

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about wet wraps and provide you with a step-by-step guide on how to apply your wet wrap at home.

We recommend you also watch our online demonstration video called Wet wrapping - www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/dermatologyvideos to help understand how to apply the bandages. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is wet wrapping?

It is a skin treatment technique using medical grade viscose garment (e.g. vest, legging, socks) or tubular bandage, used in combination with a cream treatment on the skin. The skin cream may be an emollient (moisturising cream) or a low strength topical steroid applied underneath for short periods only.

They are used to help break the itch-scratch cycle, protect the skin from the damage caused by scratching and treat flare ups of eczema. Common brands of garments / tubular bandage include Clinifast®, Comifast®, Skinnies® and Tubifast®. The garments and tubular bandages come in different sizes to suit different aged children and large and small adults.

Who can use them?

Wet wraps can be used by adults, children and infants. They can be used to help treat an eczema flare, to treat lichenified (thickened) skin or for symptom relief in other itchy skin conditions such as nodular prurigo.

How do they work?

They work by protecting the skin, rehydrating the skin and evaporation;

- Protection – the garment provides a physical barrier on the skin to prevent damage caused by scratching.
- Rehydration – The garment helps moisture to be retained by the skin. They help the emollient to be absorbed by the skin.
- Evaporation – as the garment slowly dries out, the skin feels cooler which can help to reduce the itch sensation.

What are the benefits of using them?

- Soothe and reduce inflammation
- Help soften thickened skin
- Cool and provide relief for itchy skin particularly at night time if sleep is affected
- Prevent damage to the skin from scratching and help the skin to heal
- Covering the skin can make the topical treatments work more effectively.

What are the risks of using them?

- They should not be used if the skin is infected as this can make it worse. Ask for advice from your healthcare professional if you think you might have an infection
- Steroid creams applied under wet wraps will have a stronger effect, therefore this should be used with caution, only when prescribed and supervised under a healthcare professional
- They should not be used over topical calcineurin inhibitors tacrolimus (Protopic®) and pimecrolimus (Elidel®) due to the risk of absorbing into the skin
- Wet wraps should be avoided if the person has a fever or is generally unwell.

Where can I apply them?

They can be used on the whole body if you are using garments or on arms or legs if using a tubular bandage.

What equipment do I need?

A warm and private room, usually a bathroom is a good place to apply the treatment. You will need.

- Garments or tubular bandage
- clean warm water
- scissors if using a tubular bandage
- emollient and / or topical steroid treatment as prescribed by your healthcare professional.

How do I apply the wet wrap?

Wet wraps are usually worn overnight so can be applied after bathing. Bathe according to your care plan. After the bath or shower apply a thick layer of emollient to the skin, and / or topical steroid if you have been advised to do so. Immediately after this you can apply the wet wraps.

Wet wrapping uses two layers of viscose garments or tubular bandage, applying one layer on top of the other. The first layer which lies against the skin is put on damp and then a second, outer layer on top is put on dry. The wet wraps garments are designed so that the labels and seams of the garments are worn on the outside so they do not irritate the skin.

Follow these steps to apply the garments or tubular bandage;

1. Dampen the first (under) layer by soaking it briefly in clean, warm water.
2. Squeeze out all the water so it remains damp (not dripping wet).
3. Apply to the body / limbs.
4. The second identical layer is put on over the top but this layer is dry.

How long should I keep them on for?

Wet wraps can be worn continuously for up to 24 hours at a time. If the garments begin to feel dry, you can dampen the layer next to the skin by rolling up the top layer and using a spray bottle with warm water to re-dampen the under layer. If you need to apply more emollient to the skin while still wearing the wet wrap, you can apply by rolling the garment up or down to access the skin.

Wet wraps are usually used for short periods of time to help an eczema flare settle e.g. each night for a week at a time.

How do I remove the bandage?

Wet wraps should be removed with care to protect fragile skin. If using a garment they can be removed as clothes would be, or if using a tubular bandage, they can be peeled off gently. Soaking the wet wrap garment will help if it has stuck to your skin.

Can I re-use the garments / tubular bandage?

The garments can be washed in the washing machine and re-used. The instructions on how to do this are on the garment box. Once the garments are torn or worn out you will need to get new garments on prescription or by buying them directly online or from a chemist.

Different types of wet wrap methods

Instead of covering the whole body, you can apply a tubular viscose bandage to one area of an arm or leg. This method requires a tubular bandage cut to size. Like the garments, these bandages are also made from medical grade viscose and come in different sizes. The bandage should fit snugly but not be too tight.

Some people do not like the feeling of a wet garment close to their skin. In this case, you can apply a single dry top and legging over the skin cream instead.

Useful sources of information

Watch our video about how to apply occlusive dressings:

www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/dermatologyvideos

National Eczema Society:

w: www.eczema.org

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns please speak to the nurse or doctor looking after you. You can contact the dermatology department on 020 7188 7847. If it is urgent, call the hospital switchboard on 020 7188 7188 and ask for the on-call dermatologist.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets.

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111 **w:** www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. **w:** www.nhs.uk

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Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Was this leaflet useful?

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or **e:** patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk

Leaflet number: 4905/VER1

Date published: February 2020

Review date: February 2023

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A list of sources is available on request