

Position statement on the prescribing of silk and antimicrobial garments on GP FP10 prescription

SW London CCGs* do not support the prescribing of silk garments for patients with atopic skin conditions due to the lack of evidence of efficacy in line with NHS England's national guidance on medicines which should no longer be routinely prescribed¹.

Rationale

- Four brands of knitted silk garments are currently listed in the Drug Tariff: DermaSilk®, DreamSkin®, Skinnies® and Skintoskin®.² A wide range of products are available such as eye masks, socks, vests or pyjamas. Silk garments are used as an adjunctive treatment (to emollients and topical corticosteroids) of various forms of dermatitis, eczema and allergic skin conditions.³
- The manufacturers say that silk clothing is less irritant than standard cotton clothing, protects the skin from moisture loss while remaining 'breathable' and may reduce excessive sweating.^{4, 5, 6}
- There is currently only poor evidence from published trials to support prescribing of silk garments with atopic dermatitis/eczema. A systematic review of silk garments in atopic dermatitis in 2012 concluded that the evidence of effectiveness is weak and of low quality.⁷
- The CLOTHES Trial was the first large, independent Randomised Controlled Trial to evaluate silk garments for the management of eczema. The trial concluded that Silk clothing is unlikely to provide additional benefit over standard care in children with moderate to severe eczema. The nested economic evaluation in the study suggests that use of these garments is unlikely to be cost-effective for health providers.⁸
- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance on treatment of atopic eczema in children (2007) made no recommendations about the use of such garments in the management of eczema.⁹

References

1. NHS England's 'Items which should not be routinely prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs', published on 30th November 2017, updated 27th June 2019
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/items-which-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/> (Accessed 17th July 2019)
2. Drug Tariff July 2019
3. Prescribable Medical Devices. Silk garments for eczema/atopic dermatitis. UKMi June 2014
<http://www.midlandsmedicines.nhs.uk/filestore/SilkGarments.pdf>
4. DermalSilk website - <http://www.dermasilk.co.uk/index.htm> (Accessed 16th July 2019)
5. Skinnies UK website - <https://www.skinniesuk.com/> (Accessed 16th July 2019)
6. DreamSkin website - <https://www.dreamskinhealth.co.uk/index.html> (Accessed 16th July 2019)
7. Lopes C, Silva D, Delgado L et al. Functional textiles for atopic dermatitis: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Pediatr Allergy Immunol* 2013; 24:603-13.
(<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23980847>)

8. Thomas KS, Bradshaw LE, Sach TH *et al*/ Silk garments plus standard care compared with standard care for treating eczema in children: a randomised, controlled, observer-blind, pragmatic trial (CLOTHES Trial). PLOS Med 2017; 14:e1002280.
(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5388469/>)
9. NICE Clinical Guideline 57 December 2007. Atopic eczema in children, accessed via
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG57>

Guidance for clinicians

Recommendations:

- Provide advice and treatment for atopic condition in-line with current guidelines.
- These garments are available to buy and should not be prescribed for patients.

Guidance for patients, carers and guardians

- Community pharmacists can offer advice on how to manage the symptoms of dry skin, including eczema and psoriasis, and when to seek medical advice.
- These products are available directly to buy from the manufacturers websites.

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