

Stopping the prescribing of rubefacients

A rubefacient is a medication that is applied to the skin causing redness and warmth due to increased blood flow to the area.

Examples of rubefacients are movelat, deep heat and salicylate creams and gels.

They have been previously used to treat pain in various musculoskeletal conditions as they were said to help ease aches and pains in joints and muscles.



However, more recently, medical organisations such as NHS England and NICE* recommend that the NHS stops the routine prescribing of these medications.

This is because rubefacient medications are:

- Not as safe as other medications
- Not as effective as other medications
- More expensive than other medications that do the same thing.

This means that GP surgeries are no longer recommended to prescribe rubefacients.

They can still be bought over the counter in supermarkets or pharmacies. Ask a pharmacist for more information.

*NICE= National Institute for health and care excellence

This does not include medications that contain NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti inflammatory drugs) such as ibuprofen or diclofenac gels.

Topical NSAIDs may be an appropriate alternative for some people and can be prescribed by the NHS or you can buy these over the counter too. Ask a pharmacist for advice before purchasing as they might not be suitable for everyone.

For more information:

You can speak to your practice pharmacist or local pharmacy.

Information about the changes to prescribing of rubefacients can be found at



Find out more about medicines that are being stopped or reduced at



The Patients Association can also offer support and advice at



www.patients-association.org.uk/



02084238999