

## SUNSCREENS - prescribing on the NHS

**The Pan Mersey Area Prescribing Committee recommends that sunscreens must only be prescribed on the NHS for patients who fit the ACBS prescribing criteria.**

### GUIDELINE

#### ACBS criteria

- The Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) advises on specified conditions where certain substances may be regarded as drugs and may be prescribed on the NHS<sup>1</sup>. Prescriptions issued in accordance with the Committee's advice and endorsed 'ACBS' will normally not be investigated.
- Sunscreens marked as "ACBS" in the Drug Tariff are regarded as drugs when prescribed for skin protection against ultraviolet radiation and/or visible light in abnormal cutaneous photosensitivity causing severe cutaneous reactions in genetic disorders (including xeroderma pigmentosum and porphyrias), severe photodermatoses (both idiopathic and acquired) and in those with increased risk of ultraviolet radiation causing severe adverse effects due to chronic disease (such as haematological malignancies), medical therapies and/or procedures<sup>2</sup>. This includes where caused by certain drugs e.g. demeclocycline, phenothiazines, amiodarone.
- Sunscreens should not be prescribed to patients who are taking a potentially photosensitising drug unless they actually experience drug-induced photosensitivity.
- **ACBS-marked sunscreens available in the Pan Mersey Formulary are listed [here](#).**
- Other sunscreens must not be prescribed on the NHS, and no sunscreens should be prescribed where the ACBS criteria are not met.
- **Examples of where prescribing sunscreens on the NHS is inappropriate include eczema, following surgery for skin cancers or where patients experience allergies to regular sunscreens.**

#### Patient factors

For optimum photoprotection, people with photodermatoses should use sunscreens from spring to autumn and apply them thickly and frequently (approximately two hourly). Prescribe sunscreen preparations with highest sun protection factor (SPF) to provide maximum protection, (protects against UVB) and 4- or 5-star rating (protects against UVA). Preparations with SPF less than 30 should not normally be prescribed<sup>2</sup>.

Advise any patients who don't meet the ACBS approved indication to [purchase an appropriate sunscreen](#).

Remind patients that sunscreens are not a substitute for covering the skin and avoiding sunlight.

**Where a specialist starts or recommends prescribing of a sunscreen, they should inform the GP how the patient fits the ACBS criteria.**

#### Cost

Current annual expenditure in Pan Mersey is approximately £40,000, a reduction from £80,000 in 2017.

#### References

- 1) [British National Formulary](#) (accessed Feb 2020)
- 2) [Drug Tariff](#) (accessed Feb 2020)
- 3) PrescQIPP [Bulletin 138: Sunscreens](#) (accessed Feb 2020)

**Note:** Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this statement may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy. In this situation, follow locally defined processes.

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This recommendation has been designated suitable for inclusion on the Pan Mersey APC static list and will only be reviewed if significant new evidence becomes available.

APC administration provided by [Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit](#)

Prescribing guideline

Version: 2.1

**STATIC**