

Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire CCG do **not** support the prescribing of silk garments due to limited evidence of any benefit. These items should not be routinely prescribed in primary care and this position is supported by NHS England<sup>1</sup>. Prescribing should only be considered in exceptional circumstances following a Dermatologist review, where the minimum quantity of garments necessary to meet a patient's needs should be prescribed.

## Background

A variety of silk garments such as leggings, underwear, vests, bodysuits, gloves, socks, shirts, pyjamas and sleeves are listed in the Drug tariff for the management of a variety of conditions including eczema, psoriasis, thrush and lichen sclerosis. Brands include DermaSilk<sup>®</sup>, DreamSkin<sup>®</sup> and Skinnies Silk<sup>®</sup>, although this position statement will apply to other brands of silk garments as they become available.

## Rationale

Evidence for the use of these items in eczema and atopic dermatitis is poor with only case studies or small-scale trials carried out over a short duration. A systematic review of silk garments in atopic dermatitis in 2012 concluded that the evidence is weak and of low quality<sup>2</sup>. A randomised controlled trial of silk therapeutic garments for the management of atopic eczema (AE) in children (the CLOTHES trial) concluded that the addition of silk garments is unlikely to improve AE severity or be cost effective compared with standard care alone<sup>3</sup>. NICE guidance on treatment of atopic eczema in children<sup>4</sup> makes no recommendation about the use of silk garments in the management of eczema. The British Association of Dermatologists agrees that prescribers in primary care should not initiate silk garments for any new patient and supports prescribers in deprescribing silk garments in all appropriate patients. It advises that silk garments may have a place in managing other skin conditions and clinicians must still be able to prescribe silk garments for conditions if patients gain benefit from them<sup>5</sup>. Conditions that may be appropriate for silk garment use include blistering disorders, cancers, cutaneous T cell lymphoma, epidermolysis bullosa, Hailey-Hailey, ichthyosis and Sezary cell syndrome. To review evidence, go to: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/annex-c-sps-evidence-review-silk-garments.pdf>

## Recommendations

- Do not initiate new prescriptions for silk garments.
- Prescribing should only be considered in **exceptional circumstances** following assessment by a Dermatologist. The minimum quantity of garments necessary to meet a patient's needs should be prescribed. These garments should be issued as an acute item and should not be added to repeat medication records.
- Existing patients already prescribed therapeutic clothing should be reviewed with a view to stopping **at least annually**.
- If patients wish to use silk garments without Dermatologist recommendation they should be advised to purchase them directly from the manufacturer, retail outlets or over the counter with the support of the community pharmacist.
- Patients should be advised that garments can be washed as often as necessary and they should have no more than three sets of garments, which allows for washing.

## References

1. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-v2.1.pdf>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23980847>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28409557>
4. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG57>
5. <http://www.bad.org.uk/shared/get-file.ashx?id=6326&itemtype=document>