

## **Patient information about changes to medicines or treatments on the NHS: [Changes to prescribing of rubefacients](#)**

The NHS is asking prescribers to stop or greatly reduce the prescribing of some medicines. This is because the medicines are:

- Not as safe as other medicines OR
- Not as good (effective) as other medicines OR
- More expensive than other medicines that do the same thing.

**This includes rubefacients.**

This document will explain why the changes are happening and where you can get more information and support.

### **[What are Rubefacients?](#)**

Rubefacients are preparations that produce a warm, reddening effect on your skin when you rub them in, due to increased blood flow. They are said to relieve aches and pains in joints and muscles.

Examples include Deep Heat<sup>®</sup>, Movelat<sup>®</sup>, Ralgex<sup>®</sup> Transvasin<sup>®</sup>.

### **[Why does the NHS want to reduce prescribing of rubefacients?](#)**

NHS guidance now states that Rubefacients should not be prescribed routinely because the evidence available suggests that it is not effective in relieving short- or long-term muscle pain.

In addition, The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) states that rubefacients should not be offered to treat osteoarthritis (“wear-and-tear” of the joints).

### **[What can I do if I still want to use Rubefacient products?](#)**

Rubefacients are available to purchase over-the-counter from pharmacies or supermarkets.

## Does this include products such as ibuprofen gel?

No; gels and creams containing ibuprofen or other ingredients such as diclofenac and piroxicam are called “topical NSAIDs” (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) rather than rubefaciants.

Topical NSAIDs may be appropriate for some people and can be prescribed on the NHS, or you can buy these over-the-counter too, but ask a pharmacist for advice as they are not suitable for everyone.

## Where can I find more information and support?

- You can speak to your local pharmacist, GP, or the person who prescribed the medication to you.
- The Patients Association can also offer support and advice: [www.patients-association.org.uk/](http://www.patients-association.org.uk/) or freephone 0800 345 7115
- Healthwatch is an online resource where you can feedback on your healthcare experiences: [www.healthwatch.co.uk](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk)

Find out more about the medicines that are being stopped or reduced: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-policy-guidance/>