

Dry Skin Care and Eczema instructions

Dry skin is common and can be very distressing. It is often associated with itching which can be significant. Glands in our skin deposit oil onto the skin surface that helps to keep the skin hydrated. As we age, the number of oil glands in our skin decreases and thus makes the skin more susceptible to becoming dry. Excessive bathing and scrubbing can also strip the needed oil from your skin, which again, leads to dryness. Further, in winter, we spend a lot of time in the heated indoors, which has a very low humidity. This can also lead to dry skin.

Some rashes are due to dry skin and many more are aggravated by dry skin. Thus, keeping your skin hydrated is essential in treating and preventing many rashes, especially many of the eczema rashes. Good skin care may require you to develop a new routine, but it will be well worth it in the long run.

The following are some important measures to help with preventing and treating dry skin and eczema rashes:

1. Take only warm water baths and showers. **DO NOT TAKE HOT SHOWERS.** Try not to bathe more than once a day. Bathing every other day is great for kids.
2. Use a mild, fragrance free soap such as unscented dove soap or use a soapless cleanser such as Cetaphil or Cerave cleanser. Soap should be applied with your hands only to dirty areas (underarms, feet, groin). If you are dirty from outdoor activities, etc, then soap can be applied to other areas of the body as necessary. But, in general, the shower/ bath water is enough to wash the rest of your body. If taking a bath, soak in the water for 10-15 minutes. Wash hair and body immediately before getting out of the bath (i.e. do not soak in the soapy water).
3. After bathing, PAT dry with a towel. Do not rub the skin roughly with a towel.
4. Immediately (less than 3 minutes after getting out of the bath) put on a good moisturizing cream (not a lotion). We recommend Cerave cream, Cetaphil cream or Vanicream cream. These can be found in most pharmacies and are usually sold in a jar. Vaseline (petroleum jelly) is another excellent moisturizer. For kids, vaseline can be used at night and then cover with pajamas. It is best to apply moisturizing cream twice daily everyday. Use immediately after bathing and another time during the day as well.
 - a. We may also recommend an over the counter lactic acid lotion (Amlactin XL or Lac-Hydrin). These are moisturizing and also help to 'slough' dry, scaly skin. These can sometimes sting after they are applied to your skin, but usually the stinging subsides after a few applications. These lotions may be too irritating for some conditions and in kids.
5. Switch to a fragrance free detergent such as All Free and Clear, Tide Free, Gain Free or Cheer Free. Do not use Dreft. You may also try double rinsing your clothes.
6. Avoid fabric softeners and dryer sheets. If you must use something, Bounce makes a 'Free' dryer sheet you can use.

7. Avoid all fragranced products such as body lotions and perfumes. These can be very irritating to your skin.
8. Try not to scratch. Scratching often makes the itching worse and can lead to a cycle of itching and scratching. If you need a pill to help with the itching, your doctor or physician assistant can discuss this with you. These tend to make you very drowsy, but are sometimes helpful to diminish the itching, especially itching at night. There is also an over the counter lotion called Sarna lotion. This is not helpful to treat the dry skin, but can be applied as needed to help control the itching symptoms. The Sarna lotion can be put in the refrigerator which can also be cooling when applied. Again, this is not to treat your condition, but can be very helpful with the itching symptoms.
9. A humidifier at night will help to replenish moisture in the air, especially in the winter time. Alternatively, leaving water in sinks or tubs with a towel draped over the edge to act as a wick will help restore some moisture in the air in your house.
10. Do not use rubbing alcohol, Lanacaine, Neosporin, Caladryl, Calamine lotion, Clorox, or Lysol on your skin. These products can be drying and/or irritating and often make your condition worse.

Additional tips:

- If you have been given a steroid cream or ointment, this should be applied twice a day to areas with the rash unless directed otherwise. After bathing, the steroid will be applied to areas with a rash and then your moisturizing cream or Vaseline will be applied all over the body on top of the steroid. When the rash resolves, the steroid cream can be discontinued, but you should continue with the skin care recommended above and your moisturizing cream.
- If your rash is particularly bad in certain areas, your doctor or physician assistant may recommend that you do wet wraps to these areas. To do this, you will need to soak clean towels or rags in warm water. You will apply your steroid cream or ointment to the affected area. You will then wrap with the soaked towels. You should let this sit for 1-2 hours. Another method for performing wet wraps is to use damp cotton pajamas or close fitting cotton clothes. This can be done once a day or as directed. Your doctor or physician assistant will guide you if wet wraps are needed for your condition.
- Your doctor or physician assistant may recommend that you or your child take dilute Clorox baths. To do this, put one capful of Clorox bleach in a bath tub of warm water. Soak for 10 to 15 minutes. Rinse the Clorox water off before exiting the tub. This should be done 1-2 times a week.
- Fragrance free is not the same thing as non-scented. Non-scented products often have masking fragrances and thus are not truly fragrance free.