

Atopic Dermatitis

By J. Allen Meadows, MD

Skin Care in Atopic Dermatitis

GOOD DAILY SKIN CARE IS A MUST!! Skin is not dry because it lacks grease or oil, but because it lacks water. It is important to recognize this and to practice the basic principals of good skin care daily, because atopic dermatitis is a chronic problem and you will always have dry, sensitive, easily irritated skin.

- A. Take at least one bath or shower per day using warm (not hot) water for at least 15-20 minutes. The use of cloths or brushes should be limited since these tend to irritate the skin.
- B. Avoid using soaps except in areas where they are needed. Use only a gentle soap such as Dove, Tone, Alpha Keri, Neutrogena, Purpose or a non-soap cleansing agent such as Aveeno or Emulave.
- C. Gentle pat away excess water and immediately apply moisturizer or the special skin medications prescribed to you onto your damp skin. This will seal in the water and make the skin less dry and itchy. Vaseline is a good occlusive preparation to seal in the water.
- D. Apply a good moisturizer such as Aquaphor Ointment, Eucerin Cream, Moisturel Cream, Neutrogena Emulsion, DML Forte, Vaseline Dermatology Lotion, throughout the day whenever the skin feels dry or itchy. Remember: the thicker and greasier the cream, the better.
- E. If needed, treat the scalp with a tar based shampoo, such as T/Gel or T/Sal.

Specific Instructions

- 1. Bathe 1-3 times a day.
- 2. Non facial areas: Triamcinolone 0.1% - apply to affected areas one to three times a day. Always use after each bath.
- 3. Facial areas: Hydrocortisone 1% - apply to affected areas one to three times a day. Always use after each bath.
- 4. Non-affected areas: Choose one of the moisturizers listed above to use after each bath on areas not covered with a prescription ointment.

REDUCE SKIN IRRITATION. It is often said that Atopic dermatitis is "the itch that rashes".

- A. Wash all new clothes before wearing to remove the formaldehyde and other chemicals they contain.
- B. Residual laundry detergent in clothing may be irritating. While changing to a milder detergent may help, more often adding a second rinse cycle to ensure removal of soap is better.
- C. Wear garments which allow air to pass freely to your skin. Open weave, loose fitting,

cotton-blend clothing may be most suitable.

D. Work and sleep in comfortable surroundings with a fairly constant temperature and humidity level.

E. Keep finger nails very short to help prevent damage due to scratching. Socks placed over the hands at night are helpful in children.

F. Appropriate use of antihistamines may reduce itching to some degree through their sedation effects.

G. Use sunscreen on a regular basis and try never to get sunburned.

H. Residual chlorine or bromine on the skin after swimming in a pool may be irritating. Immediately after swimming take a shower or bath, washing with a mild soap from head to toe, and then apply an appropriate moisturizer.

I. Warmth and perspiration on the skin increase itching. Excessively dry or humid air makes it worse. An air conditioner in the summer and a humidifier in the winter may help.

AVOID ALLERGENS THAT PROVOKE DERMATITIS.

A. Care must be taken to avoid only substances that are documented (proven) to flare your disease. It is important not to deny yourself or your child things unnecessarily.

B. Proper testing and challenges must be done in a controlled environment with physician supervision to determine which allergens flare your dermatitis.

MINIMIZE STRESS Anxiety, anger and frustration are commonly experienced by patients with atopic dermatitis and can provoke itching.

A. Learn about the disease. It is important to understand the chronicity of this disease, the triggering factors and the management measures which can help control it.

B. Have family members learn about the disease so they can be supportive.

C. Seek counseling if your environment is non-supportive.

CONSULT WITH YOUR PHYSICIAN AT THE FIRST SIGN OF ANY FLARING OF YOUR SKIN.

REMEMBER, EACH PATIENT REQUIRES INDIVIDUALIZED THERAPY, AND WHAT WORKS FOR ANOTHER PERSON MAY NOT WORK FOR YOU!!

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