
Atopic Dermatitis or Eczema

~ Helpful Hints for Personal Care ~

When you have atopic dermatitis or eczema your goals are:

- Try to avoid anything that makes your skin condition worse. These things may include soaps, chemicals, heat, humidity, and anxiety.
- Work closely with your doctor or health care provider to find the best ways to help you and your skin condition.

Control itching:

- Keep fingernails short to avoid scratching.
- Wear cotton gloves and/or socks at night.
- Keep rooms such as your bedroom cool.
- Dress lightly as sweating may increase itch.
- Wear soft, loose fitting, cotton clothes.
- Avoid 100% polyester.

If you have wet sores or scratches, wrap the area in Burrow's solution in a mix of 1:40 before you bathe. One brand name is Burosol[®]. This may prevent stinging. You can also use Burrow's solution instead of bathing. Talk to your pharmacist about Burrow's solution.

Bathing

Your skin may itch more when it is dry. Bathing and lubricants can help. Use warm water, not hot. Try Dove[®], Neutrogena[®] or Allenbury[®] soap.

If one kind of soap irritates your skin, try another until you find one that works for you.

Avoid rubbing your skin hard. Drain soapy water and rinse your skin in fresh, clean water.

You can try using bath oil with no soap. When using bath oil, be careful not to slip in the shower or tub.

After bathing, pat your skin dry with a soft towel. While your skin is still moist, gently apply a lubricant or moisturizer.

If your skin condition is bad, you may need to bathe several times a day and rinse with oil in water or apply lubricant. You can buy lubricant in the drug store. Use ointment or cream and avoid lotions. Lotions often burn.

Talk to your doctor or health care provider or pharmacist to suggest lubricants to try. You may need to try a few until you find one that helps you.

Washing your clothes

Ivory Snow[®] is good laundry soap. Rinse your clothes 2 times after washing to remove any soap residue which could be irritating.

Using topical steroid medication

Topical steroids are medicated creams or ointments you put on your skin. You and your doctor or health care provider work together to find the one that works best for you. These should be used in the smallest amount needed.

Only mild topical steroid medication such as hydrocortisone should be applied repeatedly to your face, armpits or groin.

When your skin condition is bad, you may need to use a steroid ointment or cream 3 to 4 times a day. As your skin condition improves, you can apply it less or not at all.

If your skin condition is weeping, you may need to use lotion. Lotion is sometimes used on the scalp. Your doctor or health care provider will help you decide what is best for you.

If an ointment or cream seems to make your skin condition worse, you could be allergic or intolerant to something in it. You will need to try another option.

Remember...

You and your doctor or health care provider will work together to find the best treatment for you. This may take some time.

When eczema is bad, your doctor or health care provider may prescribe a medication called prednisone in tablet form. Follow the instructions on how to take it carefully.

Antihistamine medication can help reduce itch. There are many types and names of antihistamine medication that your doctor or health care provider may try. Take the medication as directed. To avoid feeling drowsy, you may be advised to take the medication at night before bed. If you feel drowsy in the morning, reduce the dose or ask to try another medication. There are non-drowsy antihistamines you can try.

There are other medications that may help. This is why you work closely with your doctor and health care team to find the best treatment for you.

Checking for infection

You will need to learn to check your skin and watch for signs of infection. Infection is caused by bacteria. There are many antibiotic medications that can help. These may be taken by mouth or applied to your skin. You may have to do both when you have an infection.

Signs of infection are:

- moist or weepy skin
- yellow scabs

Contact your doctor or health care provider when you see signs of an infection. Your doctor or health care provider may take a culture of the area and check for infection. When there is an infection, a culture shows the type and the best medication to treat it.

Certain infections such as herpes simplex or the cold sore virus can be severe when you have eczema. If you get a cold sore, contact your doctor or health care provider right away.

Contact allergy

If you are allergic to something like a pet, removing it may help your skin condition.

Food allergy

If you are allergic to a food, avoiding the food may help your skin condition.