

DERMATITIS SKIN CARE

The terms “eczema” and “dermatitis” are used to describe different kinds of inflamed skin conditions including allergic contact dermatitis and atopic dermatitis. Dermatitis can be red, blistering, oozing, scaly, brownish, or thickened and usually itches. Dermatitis is very common and can occur at any age, but is most common in infants to young adults. The skin rash can be widespread or limited to a few areas. The severity of the disease can vary. In mild forms, the skin is dry, hot, and itchy, and in more severe forms, the skin can become broken, raw, and bleeding. Although it can sometimes look unpleasant, eczema is not contagious. One of the most common symptoms of dermatitis is itching, which can be mild to severe. Other symptoms include dryness of the skin, redness, and inflammation. Dermatitis can cause the skin to split, leaving it prone to infection which causes the skin to crack and weep. There are many things that can be done to help the symptoms of dermatitis.

Helpful Hints

- Use lukewarm water during baths. Keep baths short in time. Use a small amount of gentle cleanser such as Cetaphil, Dove unscented, or CeraVe, which can be found at most stores. Avoid baby shampoo and baby washes since they can actually be irritating to the skin.
- Do not completely dry off after the bath and immediately apply a heavy moisturizing cream such as Eucerin cream, Cetaphil cream, or CeraVe cream.
- Avoid harsh detergents and fabric softeners, including dryer sheets. Use half of the recommended amount of detergent in the laundry and use the rinse cycle twice.
- Mild cases can be controlled with proper moisturizing. If the area becomes very red and irritated, an over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream or ointment can be used. In severe cases, a prescription corticosteroid may be needed. The steroid cream or ointment should be applied to dampened skin to seal in the moisture. Lightly wet the area with a washcloth, then immediately apply the cream or ointment.
- In some cases, the skin may become infected due to open breaks in the skin barrier. A topical antibiotic cream or ointment such as Polysporin, Bacitracin, or prescription strength may be needed. In some cases, an oral antibiotic may be necessary.

Special Instructions

Face/cheek area: This area usually becomes a problem due to excessive moisture in the area from pacifiers, putting hands in mouth, or drooling, which causes the skin to become red and irritated. Apply Aquaphor ointment or Vaseline petroleum jelly to the area to form a barrier for the skin.

Scalp/forehead area: This area can become crusty and flaky. In some cases the skin can become red and irritated. Gently wash the area with a shampoo like Selsun Blue or Head & Shoulders and lightly scrub the area with your fingers. If the area becomes red and irritated, apply an over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream.