

CENTER FOR DERMATOLOGY, COSMETIC AND LASER SURGERY, INC.

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ATOPIC DERMATITIS

What is Atopic Dermatitis?

Atopic Dermatitis is a common condition in which the skin is inflamed, red, itchy, thickened, dry and more sensitive than usual to environmental factors such as soap, water, detergents, dust, animal fur, wool clothing, feather and so on. It usually effects areas of skin folds (front of elbows, behind knees, around mouth) and it may involve very large areas of skin. It is often associated with asthma and hay fever in the patient or the family, and others in the family often have it as well. It is worse in dry, winter weather and better in the summer and more humid weather. Because of the extreme sensitivity to soap and water, a substitute method of cleaning the skin is often required. It starts as early as 1 month of age, and usually, but not always improves with time. It can often persist into adulthood. Certain ethnic groups have higher incidence of this condition.

Prevention:

1. All clothing should be cotton. Avoid wool and scratchy synthetic materials.
2. Keep the house as dust free as possible.
3. Avoid animals or keep pets outside or at least out of the bedroom.
4. Vacuum carpets and mop floors for dust daily, especially in the bedroom.
5. Special attention should be paid to the bedroom since about 1/3 of the day is spent there.
6. Ideally there should be shutters, shades or blinds instead of curtains. If curtains are present, wash or vacuum them frequently. Remove rugs-they collect dust. Bedspreads also collect dust. No feather pillows. Use foam rubber.
7. Cut the nails short.
8. Try to avoid excessive heat and perspiration.
9. Keep the room temperature on the mildly cool side sine the heat increases itching.

Specific Treatments:

1. Bathe with short showers (less than 5 minutes) or long soaking baths in lukewarm water (greater than 30 minutes with _____ tablespoon of bleach if recommended; for a full tub of water use 1/4-1/2 cup of bleach; for a half tub of water use 1/8-1/4 cup of bleach; for a baby or toddler bathtub add one teaspoon of bleach; use regular strength 6% bleach NOT CONCENTRATED; Never apply bleach directly to skin; only soak after the bleach is mixed with the water). You can massage in coconut oil over the entire body before the bath or shower and sit in the sunlight for 10-15 minutes before the bath or shower. This will help the eczema.
2. Avoid ordinary soaps. If a soap must be used please use a gentle soap like Ivory or Dove bar and only on hairy areas like scalp, face, underarms, and groin-private area. Soap

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substitutes can be used all over as well- _____
cleanser may be used to completely replace soap and water. It can be used as often as you wish to cleanse and lubricate the skin. Apply liberally at the end of the bath or shower, rub in gently until a slight lather forms and wipe off excess with a soft dry cloth. Use gentle shampoos and wash off at the end of the shower or bath to avoid excessive skin contact with the shampoo. Until the dermatitis is well controlled, it may be best to limit soap use, or use the above cleanser, and bathe as above. After cleansing, apply a medicated cream: Day: _____ Night: _____ sparingly to the red and itchy areas. After applying the medicated cream, moisturize the entire body with Vaseline, coconut oil or _____ covering both the affected and normal skin. Repeat the day medicated cream and moisturizer at least one or two more times per day. At bedtime you may be given a medication to reduce itching and help you sleep. An antibiotic may be given to treat secondary skin infection. Once better, please decrease the use of _____ to less frequent application (once a day or every other day) until the dermatitis stays clear for a few weeks, then can stop entirely. Please maintain use of _____ as a preventative. ALWAYS maintain proper bathing, moisturizing, etc.

3. By following a few simple preventative measures treatment may not be necessary except on the infrequent occasions when the eruption flares. It is important to remember that the medicated creams will only temporarily help the eruption. If preventative measures are not strictly followed such as using soap substitutes, avoiding other irritating substances and moisturizing, the prescription medicine will never be entirely effective. Like any other medical problem, prevention is much more desirable than treatment. If you have any questions about what the skin may or may not tolerate, be sure to bring it up at your regular visit.

Remember, Atopic Dermatitis is not a condition that appeared overnight, nor will it go away that quickly. Children usually outgrow it in their teens or earlier, but it may persist for years. Atopic Dermatitis in children may become hand dermatitis in adults. One should ideally avoid occupations that require direct contact with irritating chemicals or prolonged contact with water.