

FACT SHEET: DERMATITIS

DERMATITIS (ECZEMA)

You have dermatitis. This is an itchy red inflammation of the skin. There are a number of causes for dermatitis and many different types. Some types persist and others come and go.

You will need to do the following to help settle it down

AVOID THE FOLLOWING

- Soaps, detergents and shampoos
- Frequent washing
- Hot water
- Wool and synthetic clothes
- Some products from the chemist such as pinetarsal and tea tree oil

DO THE FOLLOWING

Use soap substitutes such as QV wash, Cetaphil, Aveeno or Dove instead of soap

You can use sorbolene to wash with if it is quite severe.

Apply a moisturiser such as sorbolene, aqueous cream, QV cream, QV intensive body moisturizer, Dermeze ointment or emulsifying ointment 3 times a day.

Avoid moisturisers with fragrances or additives such as aloe vera or others.

After applying the moisturiser apply a STEROID CREAM as prescribed by your Doctor to affected areas only.

Creams are used when it is weepy and moist, ointments are used when it is dry and scaly.

STEROID CREAMS/OINTMENTS

1% hydrocortisone can be bought over the counter at the chemist without a script

This cream should be used on the face, groin and armpits. This cream is very safe and side effects are extremely rare.

Celestone M or Aristocort are medium strength and generally used on the body and limbs usually applied 2-3 times a day.

Eleuphrat, Diprosone and Betnovate (0.1%) are strong steroids used for severe dermatitis usually 2-3 times a day



Advantan or Elocon are strong steroids but are usually used only once a day.

Using strong creams/ointments for long continuous periods can causing thinning of the skin and other problems

Antihistamines are sometimes helpful to help the itch such as polaramine or chlorpheniramine but these are sedating and should be taken at night. Driving and drinking alcohol should be avoided with these.

Non-sedating antihistamines such as Claratyne, Telfast, Aerius or Zyrtec can be used in the day but are less useful.

If your dermatitis is infected an oral antibiotic should be used. If there are frequent infections, **bleach bath** 2-3 times a day will be advised using White king beach of ½ cup in a bath of 10 cm height for 10 minutes by soaking the trunk and limbs, do not submerge the head followed by rinsing off with water and pat dry. Thereafter, you can apply moisturizer followed by steroid creams/ ointments as advised by your dermatologist.

WET DRESSINGS

Wet dressings are good when things are severe or not responding.

Apply the creams as normal in a downward stroke. Apply moisturiser first then steroid. Do the wet dressings in a warm room.

The first layer of dressing could be a damp (warm water soaked) cotton cloth or cotton pyjamas (1 size smaller) should be placed next to the skin over the top of the creams.

The second layer of dressing could be a dry cotton bandage or bath robe or cotton pyjamas (normal size) should be put over the first layer to limit evaporation and to help keep you warm. These should be left on for 1-2 hours with cotton blanket if you are to warm enough with the second layer or how long it is comfortable. Legs and arms can be left bandaged till time for the next dressing.

Small areas on the limbs you can use cotton hankies or tea towels made damp with a dry crepe bandage.

For whole body and trunk you can use cotton pyjamas made damp or a long sleeve cotton T-shirt or skivvy. On the legs and arms apply a dry crepe and use either a cotton blanket, towel or preferably a dry cotton bath robe over the damp stuff.