

Skin Care in Atopic Dermatitis

Bathing

Take brief showers or baths – no more than five minutes, using warm rather than hot water.

Bleach Baths

Bleach baths, taken two or three times a week, may be an effective measure to reduce bacterial colonization of the skin and may be prescribed by your doctor. To prepare a bleach bath, pour ¼ cup household bleach into the bathtub and fill the bathtub with lukewarm water. Mix the water to ensure that the bleach has been evenly distributed. Soak for 20 minutes per treatment. If the bleach is irritating to the skin, rinse off with lukewarm or cool water prior to toweling off and application of medication or emollient.

Soap

Use a soapless liquid cleanser and soap only on those areas that need it, such as the armpits, groin, and feet rather than all over. When soap is necessary, use a mild, unscented type.

Moisturizers

Must be used within three minutes after bathing. Apply a moisturizer all over. Apply a moisturizer at least once a day, even if no bath/ shower is taken. Ointments (petrolatum ointment) are the best moisturizers; cream (thick, white cream that comes in a jar, not a pump) is second best. Lotion (comes in a pump) is the least moisturizing, as it contains more water/ alcohol.

- Ointments: for severely dry skin
- Ointments or cream: for moderate to severely dry skin
- Lotion: for mild to moderately dry skin, or for the face

Does choice of laundry soap/ dryer sheets matter?

Dye-free, fragrance-free laundry products are recommended, as fragrances and dyes can irritate the skin. Avoid wool or synthetic clothing if these fabrics irritate your skin.

Soak & Smear

Soak in a lukewarm tub for 20 minutes. Gently pat skin dry with a clean soft towel. Immediately apply any prescribed medications to affected areas, then the recommended emollient to the non-affected areas. Apply occlusion with either kitchen plastic wrap, sauna suit, or wet-wraps.

Wet-wraps can be prepared by dressing at bedtime with water-moistened full-arm/ full-leg pajamas or thermal underwear, covered by dry pajamas, worn while sleeping up to 8-10 hours a day. Infants may be wrapped (i.e., swaddled) in an analogous fashion with a water-moistened blanket covered with a dry blanket over it. Wet-wraps (especially the moistened clothing articles) should be laundered daily.

After wearing of the occlusion suit, turn the suit inside out and rinse well with plain water only. Let the suit air dry until next wearing. Do not put occlusion suit in washer or dryer.

Notes from your doctor

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your physician. There may be variations in treatment that your physician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.