

Skin Care for Atopic Dermatitis

DERM101

Bathing

Take brief showers or baths—no more than 5 minutes—using warm rather than hot water.

Bleach baths

Bleach baths, taken 2 or 3 times a week, may be an effective measure in reducing bacterial colonization of the skin and may be prescribed by your doctor. To prepare a bleach bath, pour 1/4 cup of 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 towel drying and application of medication or emollient.

Soap

Use a soapless liquid cleanser. Use 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

Use moisturizers within 3 minutes after bathing. Apply a moisturizer all over at least once a day, even if no bath/shower is taken. Ointments (petrolatum ointment) are the best moisturizers; creams (thick, white creams that come in a jar, not a pump) are second best. Lotions (come in a pump) are the least moisturizing, as they contain 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 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 from 8 to 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. Wet-wraps (especially the moistened clothing articles) should be laundered daily.

After wearing an 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 a washer or dryer.

Notes from your doctor: