



# ALLERGY ASSOCIATES

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## ECZEMA (ATOPIC DERMATITIS) TREATMENT PLAN

**Soak and Seal:** Soak for 10-15 minutes in warm water. Use baby shampoo and a mild soap like Dove® if needed. Lightly pat skin dry and apply a moisturizer within three minutes. If needed, apply topical steroid before moisturizer. Avoid moisturizers with added fragrance, colors, Vitamin E, plant products (e.g. aloe vera) or foods (e.g: almond, avocado).

Recommended moisturizers:



## ECZEMA (ATOPIC DERMATITIS) TREATMENT PLAN cont.

The cause of atopic dermatitis is complex. It tends to occur in families with allergies. There is no cure for this condition, but effective treatment is available. There is a tendency for improvement over the years, although the skin will always tend to remain dry and sensitive.

### **Bathing and Lubrication**

Although in the past you may have been advised to limit bathing, we find daily bathing more effective. Soak in the tub in lukewarm water for 5-10 minutes with no soap. After bathing, remove excess water by patting with a soft towel and immediately apply lubrication, such as Eucerin, Cetaphil, Vanicream, AmLactin, or even simple Vaseline. Bathing should be done at least daily or twice daily for best treatment. It is also important to immediately apply a small amount of lubrication to the skin whenever it becomes wet, such as after hand or face washing or after swimming. Keep lotion by every sink.

It is best to use no soap at all, but when soap must be used, a mild soap such as Neutrogena or Dove is preferred. Use the soap or shampoo just before the end of your bath and rinse well to minimize soap exposure.

### **Itching**

Keep fingernails short. Regular antihistamine by mouth can be taken to help control itching. Although it may cause drowsiness at first, this effect usually disappears after a day or two if it is taken on a regular basis. Many patients use it only at bedtime. Not all itching related to eczema responds to antihistamine. If you find an antihistamine helpful, continue to take it on a regular basis.

### **Corticosteroid Cream**

Corticosteroid creams or ointments such as hydrocortisone help to heal the dermatitis. These penetrate into the deep layers of the skin, and thus work best when applied immediately after bathing and before applying lubrication. They may be used once or twice a day. You may be given a milder corticosteroid cream or ointment for your face where your skin is thinner. When applying, rub in gently rather than vigorously. If you have been given a large tub of corticosteroid, use a spoon or popsicle stick to remove it from the tub to prevent bacterial contamination of your medicine.

### **Wet Dressings**

Wet dressings are useful for severe cases. Soak the affected area for fifteen minutes in warm water. Apply the corticosteroid ointment, and then use a liberal amount of lubrication. For use on the legs or arms, use a four inch roll of 20/12 mesh gauze, about five yards. For the trunk, use eighteen-inch gauze, 20/12 mesh. Hands can be treated using dermal cotton gloves. Soak the gauze or gloves in warm water and wring out until no more drops come out, and they feel squishy. Wrap gauze around the area and pin with a safety pin. The wet dressings are then covered with dry flannel or terry cloth, and should be changed after 3-4 hours or overnight.

### **Clothing**

Soft, breathable clothes such as cotton are best. Avoid binding clothing such as nylon tights or irritating clothing such as wool.

### **Antibiotics**

Antibiotics by mouth are occasionally needed to control skin infections that may occur.