

## Atopic Dermatitis (Eczema) Allergy and Immunology Awareness Program

Wet cotton gloves can be applied over the hands. They help keep the skin damp, augment absorption of topical medicines and have a cooling effect. The wet wraps should be made wet again or taken off when they start to dry out.

### Benefits of Wet Wrap Therapy

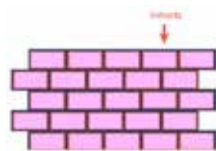
The benefits of wet-wrap therapy include:

- Skin re-hydration
- More restful sleep
- Reduced redness and inflammation
- Less frequent itching
- Decrease in the staphylococcus aureus (staph) bacteria found on the skin

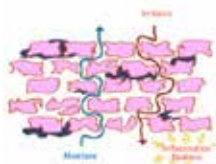
### Bleach baths

Bleach baths can reduce bacteria on the skin. To make one, mix one quarter to a half a cup of common liquid bleach (e.g. Clorox) in to a full bath tub. Soak the patient in chlorinated water for about 10 minutes. Rinse thoroughly with fresh water at the end.

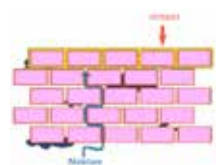
Wet wraps (used for severe cases): after a warm evening bath, gently pat or drip dry the patient and immediately apply moisturizer or skin medication on wet skin. Apply topical medication to affected areas and moisturizer to unaffected areas. Soak dressings (tube socks, Ace bandages or cotton gloves) in warm water. Squeeze out excess water (wet but not dripping). Cover affected areas with wet dressings, followed by a dry dressing on top (another tube sock, Ace bandage, dry pajamas). Wet dressings should stay in place overnight.



Normal skin is made of units called cells. These cells need to stay glued together. Moisturizing factors and fats help seal the water on the inside and keep the skin elastic.



When skin is dry, the glue shrivels up creating cracks and breaks allowing allergens and germs to enter and even more water to leave.



This can be minimized by the regular use of emollients and moisturizers. Neglecting your moisturizing regimen can cause the redness and itchiness to recur.



Every day "Soak and Seal" skin care has to be continued throughout topical treatment.

Following soaking, apply the topical medicine to your rash and moisturizer to the rest of your skin.



For more information, please contact the Allergy and Immunology Awareness Program (AIAP) at:

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# Atopic Dermatitis (Eczema)

Eczema refers to a chronic inflammatory skin condition, characterized by dry skin, with patches that are red and intensely itchy. These patches of eczema may ooze, become scaly, crusted or hardened. The patients may have times when their skin is clear and other times when they have rash. It is also called atopic eczema.

## Affected body parts

### Infants and Small Children

The rash is often present on the skin around the knees and elbows and the cheeks.

### Teenagers and Adults

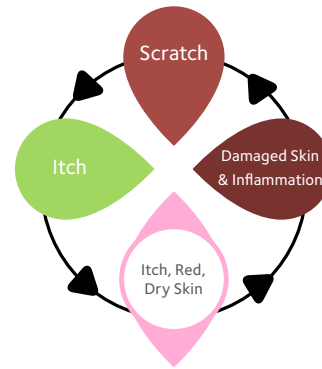
The rash is often present in the creases of the wrists, elbows, knees or ankles and on the face or neck. Atopic dermatitis (AD) usually begins and ends during childhood, but some people continue to have the disease into adulthood.

## Avoiding things that will exacerbate your rash

Nearly every person with AD has had tickly skin at some time. It is not recognized why skin feels irritated. What is known is that scratching or friction leads to even itchier skin. This is called the itch-scratch cycle. Scratching and rubbing irritates the skin and can cause or exacerbate the itchiness. Over time, scratching and rubbing may cause thickening of the skin.

## Actions to be taken to reduce itching

- Keep fingernails very short, smooth and clean to avoid harm from scratching
- Use moisturizer when you feel itchy, as an alternative to scratching or rubbing



- Apply medicines prescribed by your doctor
- Keep your hands busy and away from the rash. Lots of things can make the itch and rash of AD worse.

These are different for each individual. Ask your physician about what triggers it. Irritants, extremes of temperature and humidity, allergies, emotions and stress can worsen itching and rash. Infections and exceedingly dry skin also can be a dilemma.

## Treatment and Medication Therapy

### Soak and Seal

- Soak in the bathtub or shower each day for 15–20 minutes so that the skin absorbs a lot of water. Use warm water
- A gentle skin cleanser should be used without scrubbing
- Excess water should be gently patted away and the recommended medicine or moisturizer should be immediately applied to moist skin. Try to do this within three minutes. This seals in the water. (If you are applying skin medicine, do not apply moisturizer over it).

### A skin cleanser

is a bar or liquid used to clean the skin. Use products that are authorized for use on “sensitive skin.”

### Medications that help eczema

Medicines are additional to every day skin care when itching and rash are not well controlled and when there is infection.

The medications used in atopic dermatitis consist of:

- Topical steroids
- Anti-infectives

### Moisturizers

Emollients (moisturizers) are a major part of eczema treatment. They are used to replace lost skin moisture, help restore the normal barrier function of the skin, help the skin feel more comfortable and reduce itch. Ointments and creams are recommended instead of lotion for people with very dry skin.

A skin cleanser is a bar or liquid used to clean the skin. Use products that are authorized for use on “sensitive skin.”

## Wet Wrap Therapy

When the rash is very severe, Wet Wrap Therapy may be recommended. Wet wraps are dressings, such as gauze or articles of clothing that have been soaked in water and then applied to the skin after soaking and sealing.