



ASTEATOTIC (DRY SKIN) DERMATITIS

DEFINITION

Dry skin dermatitis is a problem for many people, especially in cold weather when there is less moisture in the air. When the skin loses water, it becomes less pliable and tends to crack and chap. The cracked, chapped areas often become irritated and result in a dry, itchy, scaly rash.

TREATMENT

The treatment of dry skin dermatitis depends on restoring the skin's normal moisture content. Use of harsh soaps and hot water should be avoided. Bath and shower water may be warm, but not excessively hot. Mild soaps will dry out your skin less than stronger "deodorant" soaps. A moisturizing cream or lotion is very important and must be used regularly. Moisturizer should be applied at least twice daily (and may be decreased after the dryness has completely cleared). It is important to apply your moisturizer while the skin is still damp after bathing; this will help to trap the moisture in the skin before it evaporates. Bath oils also help to moisturize the skin and can be used by either adding a tablespoon to the bath water (caution: slippery tub!) or by applying a small amount to wet skin after showering. Use a towel to gently blot the skin dry after application.

Sometimes, cortisone-based creams or ointments are necessary to relieve dry skin dermatitis. These are applied twice daily to red or irritated areas for one to two weeks or until symptoms improve. Occasionally, anti-itch pills or antibiotic pills may be needed for more severe cases. Anti-itch pills often cause drowsiness and should never be taken before driving. Please use all medications as directed by your physician.

Dry skin dermatitis tends to recur, especially in wintertime. At the first sign of dry skin, resume the lubrication routines you have found most effective and carefully avoid the excessive use of soap and hot showers. A humidifier can be used in the bedroom at night to increase the moisture content in your home environment.

The following over-the-counter soaps and moisturizers can be found at most drugstores and work very well in reducing the signs and symptoms of dry skin dermatitis:

<u>Soap/Body Wash</u>	<u>Creams/Lotions</u>
Basis	Purpose
Purpose	Lubriderm
Eucerin	Eucerin
Cetaphil	Complex 15
CeraVe	Cetaphil
Dove	CeraVe
Aveeno	Aveeno
Accent	Moisturel

