

Dry Skin

Definition

- The skin is dry and rough

Health Information

Symptoms

- Dry skin feels rough or bumpy
- Dry skin often is itchy
- Dry skin can be on one part of the body or all over.
- Dry, rough, bumpy skin on the back of upper arms is called **keratosis pilaris**. It's made worse by soaps.
- Dry pale spots on the face are called **pityriasis alba**. These are more prevalent in the winter time. They are also made worse by soaps.

Causes of Dry Skin

- Mainly caused by too much bathing and soap (called soap dermatitis).
- Soap removes the skin's natural protective oils. Once they are gone, the skin can't hold moisture.
- Dry climates make it worse, as does winter weather (called winter itch).
- Genetics also plays a role in dry skin.
- Dry skin is less common in teenagers than younger children. This is because the oil glands are more active.
- **Eczema**. Children with eczema have very dry itchy skin.

Prevention of Dry Skin

- Don't use soaps or bubble bath.
- Wash the hands with warm water. Use soap only if the hands are very dirty. Also, use soap for anything that won't come off with water.
- Don't use swimming pools or hot tubs. Reason: Pool chemicals are very drying.
- Run a humidifier in the winter if the air is dry.
- During cold weather, wear gloves outside. This helps prevent drying of the skin.
- Drink lots of fluids.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Dry skin is a common condition, especially in the winter time.
- Mainly caused by too much bathing and soap (soap dermatitis).
- Soap removes the skin's natural protective oils. Once they are gone, the skin can't hold moisture.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. **Soap and Bathing:**

- Young children with dry skin should avoid all soaps. Soaps take the natural protective oils out of the skin. Bubble bath does the most damage.
- For young children, the skin can be cleansed with warm water alone. Keep bathing to 10 minutes or less.
- Most young children only need to bathe twice a week.
- Teenagers can get by with using soap only for the armpits, genitals, and feet. Also, use a mild soap (such as Dove).
- Do not use any soap on itchy areas or rashes.

3. **Moisturizing Cream:**

- Buy a large bottle of moisturizing cream. Avoid those with fragrances.
- Put the cream on any dry or itchy area 3 times per day.
- After warm water baths or showers, trap the moisture in the skin. Do this by putting on the cream everywhere after bathing. Use the cream within 3 minutes of completing the bath.
- During the winter, apply the cream every day to prevent dry skin.

4. **Steroid Cream:**

- For very itchy spots, use 1% hydrocortisone cream. No prescription is needed.
- Use up to 3 times per day as needed until the itching is better.
- Eventually, the moisturizing cream will be all that you need for treating dry skin.

5. **Humidifier:**

- If your winters are dry, protect your child's skin from the constant drying effect.
- Do this by running a room humidifier full time.

6. **What to Expect:**

- Itching will usually go away after using this treatment for 2 days.
- Within 1 week the skin should feel soft and stay that way with treatment.

Call Your Doctor If

- Dry skin lasts more than 2 weeks on treatment
- You think your child needs to be seen.
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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