

Pediatric Dermatologist urges eczema patients not to let their guard down

(NC)—Atopic dermatitis (eczema) is a chronic condition that doesn't "take a break" as the weather warms up. Therefore, it is important that you don't take a break from caring for your skin! The top layers of skin provide a barrier to trap moisture in your skin and keep it soft and smooth. For those with eczema this barrier doesn't work properly and allows moisture to escape. This leaves the skin feeling dry and flaky even on the parts of the body that don't actually have patches of eczema. While it's true that people with mild eczema have less eczema in the summer it is still wise to practice proper skin care year-round.

First of all, it reinforces the routine of applying moisturizers so that, when winter comes around, moisturizing your skin will already be a "habit".

Secondly, even if your skin appears to be in good condition in the summer, you still don't have a normal skin barrier and the layer of emollient acts as a barrier to moisture loss.

Finally, for many patients with eczema, the summer months can be just as bad as the winter months. Heat causes people

to perspire in the summer and this aggravates itching, which can set off an "itch-scratch" cycle and lead to new patches of eczema. The same routines of eczema care, including the frequent application of emollients, are important.

Having a chronic illness like eczema and having to manage it daily can be difficult. This can be a real challenge for parents who are managing busy lives and also trying to bathe, moisturize and apply topical treatments to their child or children with eczema. Older children starting to manage their own skin can sometimes end up in power struggles with parents. Often these challenges lead to reduced care of eczematous skin and increased flares. Here are some helpful tips:

1. For children old enough to bathe, moisturize and medicate themselves, parents should still be supervising. Help children understand why they need to go through all of these steps.
2. Choose non-irritating emollients designed for eczematous skin. This will reduce the discomfort from additives and preservatives. Petrolatum, while greasy, offers



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outstanding barrier protection for the skin. You may need a lighter emollient in warmer weather.

3. Start medicated treatments at the first signs of redness, itch and scaling to hasten recovery and to try to prevent progression to a full-blown flare.
4. Help children develop routines for moisturizing that are similar to other daily routines, such as brushing teeth. Even when eczema is not flaring, emollients should be applied. Explain that this will help the skin become less scaly and less itchy.

For more information on how to avoid flare-ups, please visit www.eczemacanada.ca, the official site of the Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE) Program. Youngsters (and parents) are also invited to visit Penny's World at www.pennysworld.ca, a new website filled with fun activities designed to help younger eczema sufferers.

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Showering and bathing can help avoid eczema flare-ups Time in the tub can relieve eczema dryness

Fact: Eczema is a condition causing dry, irritated, sensitive skin, and conventional wisdom has been that the less exposure the skin has to water, the better. While long baths or showers in hot water can certainly dry out the skin, bathing at least once a day for about 10 minutes in lukewarm water is actually a very effective way of hydrating the skin. This holds true for both warmer and colder months of the year. Be sure, however, to avoid using harsh soaps which can cause skin irritation, and make sure to lock in that moisture by using a rich emollient immediately after bathing or showering. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to recommend a non-irritating soap for sensitive skin, as well as a good-quality moisturizer and apply it liberally following your bath or shower. By following these simple steps, you will be better able to control the dry itchy skin of eczema and keep your skin moist and hydrated. Your skin will thank you!

Step 1: Use lukewarm water. Using excessively hot water can strip away the skin's essential oils, leaving skin dry and chapped.

Step 2: Add a capful of emulsifying oil to your bath. Emulsifying bath oil is helpful in aiding moisture retention. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to recommend a suitable product for you.

Step 3: Use a mild, fragrance-free, non-drying soap or soap substitute. Avoid exposure to harsh soaps, and other drying agents, such as powders.

Step 3: Gently dry off. Use a soft towel, and lightly pat away excess water – don't rub.

Step 4: Moisturize immediately. Apply a fragrance-free moisturizer within 3 minutes of bathing to effectively seal in the moisture.

For more tips on how to avoid or manage flare-ups caused by eczema, visit www.eczemacanada.ca, the official site of the Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE) Program.

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