

# Skin care and wet wraps information

This information is a guide to skin care and wet wraps and is to be used together with the advice from your dermatologist or dermatology nurse.

## Skin Care

### Bathing and washing

- > Lukewarm water is ideal for bathing and washing. Water that is too hot causes blood vessels to dilate and increases evaporation of water from the skin and so causes dryness
- > Staying in the water for longer than 10 minutes causes the skin to dehydrate and become scaly
- > Daily bath/shower is recommended to cleanse the skin and make it feel comfortable
- > Use of bath oils and soap substitutes will prevent the loss of the skin's natural oils and help to rebuild the barrier.

### Warning: Oils can make a bath and the baby slippery!

- > Soap substitutes do not foam or lather and are generally not perfumed but they do cleanse the skin
- > Skin drying technique is also important. Vigorous rubbing will irritate the skin. Pat the skin dry gently
- > Apply moisturizer to skin after a bath/shower.

### Emollients/moisturizers

- > Moisturizers should be applied frequently (2-3 times per day at least but more if possible) to replace the lipid barrier and prevent water loss through evaporation
- > Apply in smooth, gentle downward strokes in the direction of hair growth so that the hair follicles do not become blocked and to avoid irritating the skin's surface and causing the itch sensation
- > Apply thinly so that it does not mess clothing
- > Apply gently. Vigorous rubbing does not aid absorption
- > Moisturizers can be used as often as necessary if the skin feels dry or itchy
- > Sometimes, due to seasonal variation or if the skin still feels dry after 2-3 applications per day it might be necessary to consider using a thicker cream or an ointment.

## Wet Wraps/Dressings

The main use of wet dressings is to allow greater penetration of topically applied corticosteroids or moisturizers by over hydration of the skin. It is also soothing and cooling and acts as a barrier to scratching and skin damage.

- > Wet dressings can be used 2 to 3 times a day and should be stopped once significant improvement occurs
- > Wet dressings can also be used overnight when children are most prone to scratching
- > Wet dressings are useful in settling a severe or acute eruption but are generally only needed for a few days
- > Do not use wet dressings if there is infection that is not treated, as the moist occlusive environment is ideal for the infection to worsen
- > If the condition worsens, or small pimples appear contact your doctor.

### Method for children and adults

- > Bath
- > Apply creams as directed by your doctor
- > Place cotton pyjamas (or long sleeve T-shirt and long pants in warm water and squeeze as dry as possible
- > Put on damp clothing then a layer or dry clothing
- > Leave on for 20-30 minutes
- > Remove wet clothing
- > Pat dry then apply a generous layer of moisturiser.

As skin improves, taper off wet wrap frequency rather than stopping abruptly.

**Moisturisers should be applied 3-4 times a day otherwise the skin will become dry and itchy again.**

## General tips

- > Keep fingernails short and filed
- > Avoid overheating. Keep cool

## Clothing

- > Avoid wool and certain synthetics
- > Wear loose-fitting clothing to avoid aggravation from friction caused by seams and fabric
- > Cotton is preferred!

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## For more information

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