

GENTLE SKIN CARE

The way in which we care for our skin can directly cause many rashes and often aggravates rashes from other causes. Keep your skin care simple and gentle.

Key Points to Remember

1. What you need to know about soaps: Only sweaty areas such as the armpits, groin and private areas need soap. The other areas such as the arms and legs do not need to be cleaned with soap. Plain water will suffice. Gentle soaps include Dove, Cetaphil., Aveeno, Aquanil, and CeraVe.
2. Avoid hot water. Use cooler, lukewarm water with shower or bath.
3. Take showers/baths at most once a day, and limit to 5 minute duration, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.
4. Pat dry with a cotton towel, leaving your skin damp
5. Immediately apply moisturizer all over your body: Cetaphil cream, Vaseline petroleum jelly, Eucerin cream, Aquaphor, Cerave cream
6. Reapply moisturizer 2-3 times per day
7. Wear loose 100% cotton clothing.
8. Please avoid fragrance. Use products labeled as "fragrance free" only. The term "unscented" does not mean fragrance free.

More Detail:

Soap

All soaps are irritating, some more than others are. Some companies make soap products with fragrance, and others without. Be sure to read the label and buy "fragrance-free" products. Examples of mild, gentle soaps include Dove® sensitive skin bar, Cetaphil Cleansing Lotion®, Aveenobar®, Purpose Soap®, Basis®, and Oil of Olay Cleansing bar®.

Highly fragranced soap and antibacterial soaps are the most irritating and should be **avoided**. Examples include: Ivory®, Dial®, Tone®, Coast®, Irish Spring®, Shield®, Safeguard®, Caress®, Zest® and Lever 2000®.

Bathing

Hot water is more irritating than cool or warm water. Frequent contact with very hot water can be particularly irritating. Bathing recommendations include brief (less than five minutes) showers with warm to cool water. Using small amounts of soap on the fingertips is the least irritating method of cleansing. Avoid use of washcloths, loofa pads, Buf Pufs®, or other abrasive items.

For people who have the time to take a bath, a bath can be good for dry skin if done appropriately. The bath water should be lukewarm, not hot, and you should stay in the bath at least 15 minutes. Bubble bath should never be used. Do not use soap, or wait until the end of the bath to use soap. Right after using the soap, get out, rinse the soap off immediately in the shower if possible, and then apply a thick moisturizing cream or ointment (see other side) immediately, before the moisture evaporates from the skin. Bathing in this fashion puts water into the skin and then traps it there. If you don't have the time for a long bath, then don't get in the bath at all. If you shower, keep it short.

For most people it is better to take a shower or bath only once a day. In fact, individuals with extremely sensitive skin and many older individuals find they do best with bathing only two or three times weekly. For some skin conditions patients will be instructed to soak in a bath 2-3 times a day. Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, only bathe once a day or less.

Moisturizers

After bathing or showering, gently pat away excess water, and immediately (within 2 minutes) apply a moisturizer or any special skin medications onto damp skin. It is very important that the moisturizer or skin medication is applied quickly after bathing. Apply moisturizer at least once a day, preferably 2-3 times, even if you don't bathe every day.

In general, the greasier a moisturizer is, the better it will work. Thinner moisturizers and lotions are easier to apply; however, they are not as effective as the heavy moisturizers and should only be used for mildly dry skin.

Examples of good moisturizers are:

Ointments (greasy, most effective): petrolatum, Vaseline®, petroleum jelly, Aquaphor®

Creams (medium effect): CeraVe Cream®, Cetaphil Cream®, Eucerin Original Cream®

Lotions (lightest, least effective): Cerave Lotion®, Eucerin Original Lotion®, Cetaphil Lotion®

Creams such as Carmol® or Ureacin® are often very effective moisturizers and may help smooth rough, scaly skin, but may sting when your skin is very dry or scaly. The same is true of creams containing Alpha Hydroxy Acid such as Aquaglycolic Hand and Body Lotion®, Lachydrin® or Lac-Lotion®. Though they may sting in the beginning when your skin is at its worse, they are great for keeping your skin in good condition in the long run.

Eliminate Irritants

Identify and eliminate the things that may cause your skin to flare-up. Chemicals, products with fragrance, soaps, temperature change, sweating, scratchy fabrics like wool, and stress are common culprits.

- Wash new clothes before wearing them with a mild detergent that doesn't have dyes or perfumes to remove formaldehyde and other chemicals
- Adding another rinse cycle will also remove excess detergent.

- Try to keep the room temperature and humidity levels at a comfortable level. Humidifiers and vaporizers if used to increase humidity must be cleaned daily to prevent mold growth.
- Many people are irritated by fabric softener strips such as Bounce® and Cling Free® (the type in the dryer). It is best to use a liquid softener such as Downey-Free®, or better yet, no fabric softener at all.
- Laundry detergents should be perfume and dye free. Many brands such as Tide® and Cheer®, make some of their products perfume and dye free. Read the labels.