

HAND ECZEMA

Hand eczema is due to moisture loss, which damages the skin's outer layer and may result in red, cracked, dry, itchy, skin. Occasionally blisters or swelling may occur. It may take months to heal and may become chronic. Hand eczema generally occurs when sensitive skin becomes exposed to irritants. Factors include frequent hand-washing, use of irritating household products, frequent contact with water, and certain occupations which require exposure to chemicals. Persons with a history of childhood eczema are more commonly affected with hand eczema.

TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

1. Decrease hand washing.
2. Cleansers: Use soap-free, or fragrance-free gentle cleansers (Cetaphil® cleanser, Fragrance-free Dove, etc.).
3. Avoid hot water.
4. Gloves: Use cotton glove liners (purchase at grocery or drug store) under vinyl gloves when contact with detergents, chemicals, or prolonged exposure to water are unavoidable.
5. Moisturizers: Apply a moisturizer to hands after each hand washing and any time that your hands are dry.
 - **Ointment based products** are the most moisturizing, the least irritating, but the messiest. Examples include: Vaseline, SBR Lipocream, and Neutrogena hand cream.
 - **Creams** (fragrance-free) are also good moisturizers and include Cetaphil®, Eucerin, DML Forte, and Moisturel cream. Vanicream™ is free of most irritants and is a good choice for very sensitive skin. Your pharmacist can order it for you.
 - **Lotions** are the least moisturizing, but are suitable if you have mild dermatitis or when your dermatitis is doing well. Pick a fragrance free product such as Cetaphil®, Vanicream™ lotion, etc.
6. Prescription products:

Topical steroids: Use the strong topical steroid _____ ointment/cream twice a day for a few weeks. When the rash is improved significantly, you should switch to a milder steroid _____ ointment/cream. Taper off all of the steroid creams when doing well. (*Steroid creams, particularly the stronger ones may thin the skin with prolonged use for many months. In addition steroids don't work as well if used continually.*) If the rash recurs at a later date, the creams may be used again.

Antihistamines: For itching, an antihistamine _____ may be prescribed. Most of these may make you sleepy and should be used at bedtime or when you plan to be at home.

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