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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Skin Care for Cutaneous T-Cell Lymphoma

This information describes how to care for your skin if you have cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTCL).

It's important to take good care of your skin if you have CTCL. This can help prevent skin infections, ease uncomfortable symptoms, and help your skin look better. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions and the guidelines below to care for your skin.

## General Skin Care Guidelines

- Use an over-the-counter, unscented moisturizer at least once or twice a day. Examples of moisturizers you can use are Vaseline<sup>®</sup>, Cetaphil<sup>®</sup>, CeraVe<sup>®</sup>, Eucerin<sup>®</sup>, Aquaphor<sup>®</sup>, Aveeno<sup>®</sup>, and Vanicream<sup>®</sup>. It's best to use the moisturizer while your skin is wet (such as after a shower or bath). This will help seal in the moisture. This is called the soak and smear method.
- Take a short, lukewarm shower or bath every day. Showering or bathing for too long can dry out your skin. Avoid showering or bathing for more than 5 to 7 minutes at a time. Only use unscented soaps such as Dove<sup>®</sup>, Aveeno<sup>®</sup>, or Cetaphil<sup>®</sup>. After bathing, pat your skin dry with a towel and apply moisturizer while your skin is still wet.
- If you're using any topical medications (medications you apply on your skin), such as topical steroids, follow the instructions on the package and from your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider may suggest that you use the soak and smear method when applying them.
- Use humidifiers in your home to keep moisture in the air, especially at

night while you're sleeping. Warm, dry air can make your skin dry and itchy. A humidifier can help with this. Make sure to clean your humidifier so it doesn't grow mold. Follow the instructions it came with for help with this.

- Wear loose-fitting cotton clothing. Try to avoid fabrics such as wool because they may irritate your skin.
- Use unscented laundry detergent to wash your clothing. Avoid using other scented laundry products, such as fabric softeners and dryer sheets.
- Keep your fingernails short. This will keep you from scratching your skin too hard which can cause cuts in your skin and lead to infections.

## Managing Dry or Itchy Skin

If you have dry or itchy skin, follow the guidelines below. Make sure to also follow the guidelines in the 'General Skin Care Guidelines' section.

- Tell your healthcare provider if your skin is itchy. They may give you a topical medication (such as a topical steroid) to help manage it. If they do, follow the instructions on the package or from your healthcare provider.
- Use over-the-counter, anti-itch topical lotions with pramoxine, menthol, or camphor (such as Sarna<sup>®</sup> lotion).
- Use cool compresses or ice packs to help soothe itchy skin. You can keep these on your skin for a 5 to 10 minutes at a time throughout the day.
- Ask your healthcare provider if you should take an antihistamine. Antihistamines are over-the-counter medications that can help with itching. Examples include Benadryl<sup>®</sup>, Zyrtec<sup>®</sup>, Claritin<sup>®</sup>, and Allegra<sup>®</sup>. If you have severe itching, don't scratch. Tell your healthcare provider, and they may recommend prescription medication.

# Bleach Baths

Your healthcare provider may recommend that you take bleach baths. These can help with skin irritation. They can also help lower your risk of skin infections, especially if you have any open sores or raw, itchy skin.

- To make a bleach bath, add ½ cup of regular strength, liquid bleach, such as Clorox® to every ¼ full bathtub of warm water. Avoid getting your face, eyes, or hair wet. Don't sit in the bath for longer than 10 minutes.
- If your healthcare provider tells you to, take a bleach bath 2 to 3 times a week.

# Skin Biopsies

If you have CTCL, you may need to have skin biopsies during your treatment. A skin biopsy is a procedure to remove or test a suspicious area of skin or tissue. Caring for your wound after this procedure is important to help prevent infection and help you heal with little pain or discomfort.

For more information about caring for your wound after a biopsy, read our resource *Caring for Your Wound After Your Skin Procedure Without Sutures* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/wound\\_care\\_without\\_sutures](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/wound_care_without_sutures)).

## Contact your healthcare provider if you have:

- A fever of 100.4 °F (38 °C) or higher.
- Pain, redness, or swelling in any part of your skin.
- Any new, open sores.
- Foul smell or pus draining from open or cracked skin.
- Severe itching, such as itching that keeps you up at night or itching that won't stop.
- Dry eyes or a dry mouth.

- Skin issues that don't get better after following the suggestions in this guide.

## Resources

For more information about CTCL, and information about treatment and support groups, visit the Cutaneous Lymphoma Foundation's website [www.clfoundation.org/mycosis-fungoides](http://www.clfoundation.org/mycosis-fungoides).

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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