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EczemaNet Article Wet Wraps Can Relieve Severe Eczema

If it seems that absolutely nothing will alleviate that red, cracked, and unbearably itchy skin, you may want to ask your dermatologist about wet-wrap therapy. This therapy has proven effective in treating hand eczema and severe atopic dermatitis.

Studies show that wet-wrap therapy can effectively re-hydrate and calm the skin. In 1 such study, children with severe atopic dermatitis who had not responded to other treatments were treated with wet-wrap therapy. All children experienced significant improvements. In just 1 week, there was a 74% average reduction in itch and the children had less sleep loss. Improvements to their skin lasted well beyond the 2 weeks of treatment.¹

How to Use Wet Wrap Therapy

As the name implies, wet-wrap therapy involves wrapping wet bandages around the affected skin. This is generally done before bedtime. The steps recommended by your dermatologist may differ slightly to accommodate a patient's specific needs. However, the basic technique is as follows:

1. The patient soaks in a bath with bath oil. The water should be lukewarm, and the bath should last 5 to 10 minutes.
2. After bathing, pat the skin partially dry with a towel. Do not rub the skin as rubbing can irritate the skin.
3. Apply moisturizer and medication. This should be applied to the patient's skin as directed by your dermatologist.
4. Moisten the bandages and wrap. The bandages are generally moistened by soaking them in the bathwater or applying moisturizer. Note: When treating an infant or very young child, moistened pajamas may be used instead of wet wraps. Special care must be taken to prevent these children from becoming chilled.
5. Wrap the wet bandages on the area to be treated. Wet bandages can be used on any area of the body that the patient will tolerate, including the face.
6. Lock in moisture by applying dry bandages over the wet ones.

Benefits of Wet Wrap Therapy

The benefits of wet-wrap therapy include:

- Skin re-hydration
- More restful sleep
- Reduced redness and inflammation
- Less frequent itching
- Decrease in the *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph) bacteria found on the skin

Drawbacks of Web Wrap Therapy

Wet-wrap therapy has some drawbacks. It is time-consuming. If you are treating a child, it requires a great deal of patience and supervision. Children tend to squirm when the bandages are being applied and may try to remove the bandages. As one parent said, "It's not a nice thing for any parent to have to do." However, most parents agree that the results are worth the effort when other therapies are not effective.

How to Maintain Results

Wet-wrap therapy is generally used for 1 to 2 weeks. To maintain the results, you must apply moisturizer frequently throughout the day and after bathing. Additionally, triggers must be avoided, and it may be necessary to continue using medication.

If you feel that nothing will bring relief, be sure to talk with your dermatologist about wet-wrap therapy. It may be exactly what is needed to "wrap up" severe eczema.

Reference:

¹ Wolkstein A et al. "Efficacy and safety of wet-wrap dressings in children with severe atopic dermatitis: influence of corticosteroids dilution." *British Journal of Dermatology*, 2000 November;143 (5):999-1004.

Did You Know?

Studies show that wet-wrap therapy can effectively re-hydrate and calm the skin.