

# Common Skin Conditions

## WHAT IS IT?

The most common types of dermatitis include

- **Atopic dermatitis (eczema).** Usually beginning in infancy, this red, itchy rash most commonly occurs where the skin flexes — inside the elbows, behind the knees and the front of the neck. When scratched, the rash can leak fluid and crust over. People with atopic dermatitis may experience improvement and then flare-ups.
- **Contact dermatitis.** This rash occurs on areas of the body that have come into contact with substances that either irritate the skin or cause an allergic reaction, such as poison ivy. The red rash may burn, sting or itch. Blisters may develop.
- **Seborrheic dermatitis.** This condition causes scaly patches, red skin and stubborn dandruff. It usually affects oily areas of the body, such as the face, upper chest and back. It can be a recurring condition with periods of remission and flares.

## WHAT CAUSES IT?

- **Age.** Dermatitis can occur at any age, but atopic dermatitis (eczema) usually begins in infancy.
- **Allergies and asthma.** People who have a personal or family history of eczema, allergies, hay fever or asthma are more likely to develop atopic dermatitis.
- **Occupation.** Jobs that put you in contact with certain metals, solvents or cleaning supplies increase your risk of contact dermatitis. Being a health care worker is linked to hand eczema.
- **Health conditions.** You may be at increased risk of seborrheic dermatitis if you have one of a number of conditions, such as congestive heart failure, Parkinson's disease and HIV infection.

## SELF CARE

- Wash exposed skin, clothing, and equipment with warm (not hot) soapy water.
- Moisturize your skin especially after bathing. Routinely using moisturizers can reduce the severity of atopic dermatitis. For mild forms of the condition, moisturizer may be the main form of treatment.
- Choose mild laundry detergent. Because your clothes, sheets and towels touch your skin, choose mild, unscented laundry products. Avoid fabric softeners. unscented laundry products.
- Itching:
  - Cool water compresses
  - Oral antihistamines (Benadryl® or Zyrtec®); use as directed on package labeling. May cause drowsiness and alcohol should be avoided.
  - Topical Hydrocortisone 1% cream applied twice daily for 5 days in very small amounts (caution on face/genitals).
  - Avoid scratching a rash as this may lead to infection
- Blisters:
  - Warm salt water compresses (1/2 tsp salt to 1 pint of water) four times a day.
  - Domeboro solution (available in drug stores) may be helpful too. Use as directed.
  - Calamine lotion will help dry small blisters and relieve the itching of contact dermatitis.
- Wear cotton clothing. Smooth-textured cotton clothing can help you avoid irritating the affected area.

The information presented here is not intended to be used for the diagnosis of a health problem or as a substitute for consulting a licensed medical professional. When using an Over-the-Counter medication please be sure to follow the package instructions.

Contact Health Services if you have any additional questions, concerns or to make an appointment.



Learning with Purpose

The Wellness Center at University Crossing  
978-934-6800

<http://www.uml.edu/student-services/Wellness-Center>