

## Soak and Smear Instructions for Patients

Many dermatologic conditions are manifested by dry, irritated and itchy skin. Patients with skin disease tend to have more sensitive skin than normal skin.

**Symptoms:** itching, redness and a pinprick sensation

### *Three types of glands found in the skin:*

1. **Sebaceous Gland** produces an oily substance, called sebum (body's natural moisturizer)
  - Found over most of the body with the highest amount on the face and upper trunk and the fewest on the arms and the legs, which tend to dry the earliest
2. **Eccrine Sweat Gland**, which produces sweat during over-heating.
  - Sweat has the same consistency as water, so it will be removed from your skin when water (without soap) runs over your skin in the shower.
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3. **Apocrine Gland**
  - Found only in the armpits and groin and thus, limit the use of soap in your armpits and groin to avoid drying and irritation.
  - After washing and patting dry, apply moisturizer.

Soaking and Smearing involves 'soaking' the affected body part or whole body bathing in water (without additives) for 20 minutes and immediately following by 'smearing' of an ointment over the affected area without drying the skin.

Soaking and smearing complement each other and work to restore and maintain normal skin barrier functions. 'Soaking' serves the

important purpose of removing crust and scale, while 'smearing' causes hydration to the damaged layers of your skin.

### Strategies to limit drying of the skin:

- Limiting the use of soap to armpits and groin (apocrine-containing sites) and adding moisturizers after any washing, are instituted with the initial therapy.
- Soaking in pools or hot tubs does not work and often induces irritation.
- Soak and smear therapy is usually only needed for several nights up to 2 weeks max.

### Procedure for Soaking and Smearing:

Usually soaking and smearing is done at night for 4 nights to 2 weeks. Treatment is done at night for complete moisturization to take place for several hours during sleeping. After the skin is under control, the soaking should stop, but the night 'smears' with an ointment or moisturizer should continue.

Soak in a bath (not a simple shower) in water (no additives) for 20 minutes at night. Following the 20 minute 'soak', 'smear' topical steroid ointment (prescribed by your doctor) for the amount of days suggested by your physician. After your skin has improved your physician may recommend that you continue the 'soak and smear' technique with over the counter ointments to keep the skin irritation from returning.

### *The 'soaking' allows:*

1. To trap water in the skin (since water cannot move through oil) and thus, effectively moisturizes the initial skin layers
2. The anti-inflammatory ingredient in the ointment to seep deep into the skin.

### Further Suggestions:

#### Bath Temperature

- Water should be lukewarm
- Hot water often dries the skin, causing a "re-bound" effect, where the skin itches even more than previously

#### Length of Bath

- Long baths wash off the natural protective oils of the skin
- Suggested bath oil is Alpha-Keri or Lubath

#### Soap

- Soap in the shower increases the drying process by removing the oils that the skin naturally produces. Try to use cleansers rather than soap.
- Recommended soap-free cleansers:** Neutrogena, Oilatum Superfatted Basis or Unscented Dove, Cetaphil, Aquanil

#### Recommended Moisturizers after Ointment Application:

(from less greasy to heavy, Vaseline type) Cetaphil cream, Eucerin Plus, CeraVe, Aveeno for extra dry skin, Aquaphor, Vaseline ointment.

After the skin has regained control, the 'soak' can be eliminated, but continue to apply the ointment as recommended.

To amplify the moisturizing effect, your doctor could recommend that you wear a sauna suit. The sauna suit has two roles: 1) it traps in moisture and 2) it will limit the mess from the topical ointments. Follow the same instruction and after 'smearing' of topical steroid or ointment, a sauna suit is worn. If you find the sauna suit uncomfortable you may take it off after an hour or two. You may find that you will be able to tolerate the suit for longer periods with time. You can also use 'wet to dry' pajamas

instead of the sauna suit (a pair of damp pajamas covered by a pair of dry pajamas).

### **Maintenance Treatment: Prevent Future Drying/Irritation**

- Repeated wetting (i.e. Baths, showers, swimming) without application of moisturizer will continue to dry out the skin
- Anytime you are submerged in water, apply moisturizer following the 'soaking'
- Lighter moisturizers can be used during the day, including Aveeno or Cetaphil cream
- For the night, petroleum jelly (i.e. Vaseline intensive care or Aquaphor) is readily available for intense moisture treatment.

### **Ordering Information:**

#### **Big 5 Sporting Goods**

Everlast Thermal Sauna Suit, \$16.99

Visit the website:

<http://big5sportinggoods.com/>

or call at 510/ 865-6486

For more information, please visit the Stanford

Lymphoma site:

[http:// cutaneouslymphoma.stanford.edu](http://cutaneouslymphoma.stanford.edu)

Cutaneous Lymphoma Foundation website:

[www.clfoundation.org/treatment/compounding\\_pharmacies](http://www.clfoundation.org/treatment/compounding_pharmacies)

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Edited by NV in 2009

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## **Soak and Smear**

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### **Multidisciplinary Cutaneous Lymphoma Clinic**

