Neurodermatitis

Neurodermatitis is a condition caused by persistent, severe itching that causes a person to continually scratch and rub their skin for a long time. This causes thickening of the skin in that area. This often occurs on the back and sides of the neck, the wrists and ankles. Underlying causes may exist, such as pre-existing eczema. However, neurodermatitis is not usually due to any specific cause. A vicious cycle of itching-scratching usually occurs. The skin can become very irritated from scratching leading to:

- Bleeding.
- Scaling.
- Crusting.

Neurodermatitis is usually made worse by:

- Drying or irritating chemicals.
- Rough clothing.
- Scratching.

Washing your skin with soap and water removes natural oils. This allows small cracks to develop in the skin and starts the itching. To prevent this type of irritation, limit showering to three times weekly. Avoid very hot water and harsh soaps.

Treatment includes applying a moisturizer like Eucerin, Cetaphil, Aquaphor, or Vaseline 5-6 times daily. Use these on affected areas immediately after showering to seal in moisture. **Avoid moisturizers that are scented. These can dry your skin and make your itching worse.** Avoid clothing such as wool that irritates your skin. To help control itching, medications may be needed by prescription from a skin doctor (*dermatologist*) that need to be used as directed. These medications include topical steroids (*corticosteroids*). Over-the-counter cortisone creams applied 3-4 times daily to affected areas can be helpful with the itching. Antibiotic treatment may be used for infected skin or oral cortisone medicine for severe cases.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

Your condition worsens or is not better after 3-4 days of treatment.

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