Contact Dermatitis

Contact dermatitis is a reaction to certain substances that touch the skin. The substances may irritate the skin or cause an allergic reaction. Many substances can cause contact dermatitis. Common causes are cosmetics, jewelry, soaps, solvents and any number of chemicals. The area of skin that is exposed becomes dry, red, cracked, and itchy, and looks like a rash. In severe cases, blisters may develop. *Symptoms* (problems) can be controlled with treatment and by avoiding substances that caused the reaction.

TREATMENT AND PREVENTION MEASURES

- Keep the area of skin that is affected away from hot water, soap, sunlight, chemicals, acidic substances, or anything else that would irritate your skin. Do not rub the skin.
- Use medications as directed.
- You may use:
  - A topical steroid to reduce *inflammation* (soreness) and *anti-bacterial* (germ) ointments for secondary infections.
  - Lubricants to keep moisture in your skin.
  - Burrow's solution to reduce inflammation or dry rash if weeping. Mix one packet or tablet in 2 cups cool water. Dip a clean washcloth in the mixture, wring it out a bit, and put it on the affected area. Leave in place for 30 minutes, then re-soak the washcloth and apply again. Do this as often as possible throughout the day.
- If the area is too large to cover with a wash cloth, take several cornstarch or baking soda baths daily.
- You may want to rest affected areas until less sore.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- An unexplained oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests.
- You see signs of infection, such as swelling, tenderness, *inflammation* (redness), or warmth of affected area.
- Treatment does not relieve your symptoms within two days, or as suggested by your caregiver.
- You have any problems related to medication used.

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