Hand Dermatitis

Hand dermatitis (also called *dyshidrosis*), is a skin condition. Small, itchy, raised dots or fluid-filled blisters form over the palms of the hands. The feet may sometimes also be involved.

CAUSES

The cause is unknown.

- But this problem occurs most often in patients with a history of allergies such as:
  - Hay fever and allergies.
  - Asthma.
  - Hives.
- Chemical exposure, injuries, or anything else that irritates the skin makes hand dermatitis worse.
- Frequent hand washing:
  - Removes natural oils.
  - Dries the skin.
  - Can contribute to outbreaks.
- Exposure to household chemicals or hair care products can also damage the skin.
- Allergy to latex gloves can cause:
  - Hand dermatitis.
  - Hives.
  - Breathing problems.
- Outbreaks of hand dermatitis can last 3-4 weeks.

SYMPTOMS

The most common symptom is intense itching. Cracks or grooves (*fissures*) on the fingers or toes can develop. Affected areas can be painful, especially with large blisters.

TREATMENT

Treatment for hand dermatitis includes **avoiding excessive hand washing and taking measures to avoid secondary infection.** Steroid creams and ointments (such as over-the-counter 1% hydrocortisone cream) can reduce inflammation and improve moisture. These should be applied at least 2-4 times/day. Your caregiver may ask you to use a stronger prescription steroid cream to help speed the disappearance and improve the appearance of the blisters, and to treat the cracks and fissures that occur after the blisters have dried.

Moisturizers work well such as:

- Eucerin cream.
- Cetaphil cream.
- Aquaphor.
- Vaseline.
- If the dermatitis is severe, oral cortisone medicine or even antibiotics may be needed at the start of treatment.

Compresses. Wet or cold compresses can help:

- Alleviate itching.
- Increase the effectiveness of the topical creams.
- Minimize blisters.

Antihistamines. Your caregiver may prescribe anti-itching medication such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl®) or loratadine (Claritin®), to help reduce itching.

Avoid all harsh chemicals. Wear protective gloves when necessary. Use gloves when you shampoo or use hair creams or dyes.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The rash is not better after one week of treatment.
- Signs of infection develop.
- The rash is spreading despite treatment.

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