Plantar Dermatosis

Plantar dermatosis is a condition involving severe skin chapping of the sole of the foot. The condition usually affects children between the ages of 7 and 14. It tends to be worse in the fall and winter months.

CAUSES

Plantar dermatosis is caused by:

- Inflammation (the body's way of reacting to injury and/or infection) of the soles of the feet.
- Wearing heavy, nonbreathing socks and shoes that keep the feet moist enough to cause irritation.
- Areas of skin where pressure is normally applied (along the toes, the ball of the foot and the heel) become brittle and scaly.
- Children with allergy problems and eczema seem to be at greater risk for this condition.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms affect the soles of the feet (especially the ball of the foot and the heel) and the underside of the toes. Symptoms can include:

- Dryness.
- Redness.
- Shiny looking skin.
- Pain.
- Cracking.
- Severe chapping.
- Itching.

DIAGNOSIS

A diagnosis is usually made by examination of the feet, which have a characteristic appearance. A scraping of affected skin can be examined in a lab to make sure that there is no bacterial or fungal skin infection.

TREATMENT

To treat plantar dermatosis:

- Take off heavy shoes or boots when you come in from the cold. Wear lighter leather shoes indoors.
- Wear cotton socks. Change them a couple of times a day.
- Apply topical steroids or other heavy lubricants (such as petroleum jelly) to your feet twice a day.
- At bedtime, apply steroids or creams and wrap your feet in plastic wrap to hold the lubricant against the affected skin. Your caregiver can help you with specific steroids and/or creams that can help.
- Severe itching may improve with antihistamines such as diphenhydramine.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Change out of wet shoes/socks as soon as possible. It is best to keep your feet dry when possible.
- Avoid rubber or plastic footwear.
- Change out of heavy footwear whenever possible.
- Wear open sandals in good weather to allow your feet to breathe.
- Follow your caregiver’s instructions regarding moisturizing your feet.
- Keep your feet as clean as possible to avoid getting an infection.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU:

- Develop any new or severe pain.
- Notice more redness or a hot feeling in your feet.
- Notice pus leaking from the cracks in the feet.
- Notice red streaks in the skin extending away from affected areas.

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