

Wet dressings for eczema



When to use wet dressings



- Wet dressings play an important role in the treatment of eczema
- Wet dressings should be used when your child is hot and itchy and if they wake at night due to the itch
- Your child may also need a wet dressing if there is blood on the sheets or if the eczema is still present despite treatment with cortisone ointments, moisturisers and bath oils
- Early use of wet dressings will reduce the amount of cortisone creams needed to control the eczema
- Parents and children who have used wet dressings generally express great satisfaction with the technique and many have found them to be life changing

How wet dressings help eczema



- Wet dressings help to reduce itch by **cooling** the skin. The itch is worse when the skin is hot and inflamed
- Wet dressings help with the treatment of **infection**, as they help to clean the skin's surface
- Applying moisturiser under the wet dressings helps to **rehydrate** the skin
- Wet dressings **protect** the skin from fingernails and scratching, and help the skin to heal
- Wet dressings help to develop a good **sleep** pattern for the child and their family

How to apply a wet dressing

1. Getting started



You will need:

- Bowl
- Tepid water
- Bath oil
- Cortisone or anti-inflammatory cream (if prescribed)
- Moisturiser (Dermeze or Hydraderm)
- Disposable towels
- Crepe bandages

2. Setting up



- Wash your hands
- Fold disposable towels in half
- Fill bowl with tepid water
- Add one capful of bath oil and disposable towels to bowl
- Spoon creams out onto a dry towel

3. Applying the creams



- Apply cortisone or anti-inflammatory creams, as prescribed, to all areas affected with eczema
- Apply moisturiser over the cortisone ointments and to the whole of the body and face

4. Applying the wet towels



- Wrap the wet towels around the areas of eczema, using a few layers

5. Applying the crepe bandage



- Wrap crepe bandages around the wet towels, firmly but not tightly
- Avoid direct contact of the bandage with the skin

6. Applying the wet t-shirt and bandana



- Wet cool compresses can be applied to the neck as a scarf (only knot once), and a wet bandana can be applied to the head
- The scarf and bandana should be applied only under supervision and not at bedtime
- For the trunk, apply a wet T-shirt or singlet. This can be repeated as often as needed and a dry T-shirt can be applied over the top

7. Cool compressing



- Cool compressing is a wet dressing for the face
- Wet disposable towels in a bowl of cool water and bath oil
- Hold the towels on to the face for 5-10 minutes
- Apply moisturiser immediately after compressing
- Cool compressing should be applied as often as needed until the itch is relieved

Important information about wet dressings



- Wet dressings are best applied at night, however they can be used during the day if the eczema is severe
- Wet dressings will dry after a few hours. Do not leave the dressings on dry (unless your child is sleeping) as dry dressings can irritate the skin by causing it to become hot, dry and itchy
- Crepe bandages used for wet dressings may be washed in the washing machine. Do not wash or reuse the disposable towels
- Do not use antiseptic bath oils in the wet dressings as these may irritate and burn your child's skin

For all enquiries contact the Dermatology Nurse Coordinators, Dermatology Department, The Royal Children's Hospital Telephone 9345 5510