

Eczema Management: Diluted Bleach Baths (in Children)

What are Dilute bleach baths?

People with eczema are at increased risk of infection from bacteria on the top layer of the skin, especially the bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* or “staph”. This is due to itching, scratching and eczema’s effect on the immune system. One technique that can help decrease the number of infections and possibly reduce the need for antibiotics in people with eczema is called "dilute bleach baths." Just like swimming pools are chlorinated to help cut-down on bacteria living in the water, together you will "make your very own swimming pool" in the bathtub. This special water will help remove bacteria on the skin and reduce swelling that can cause itching and infection.

Here are our simple recommendations:

Steps:

1. Start by adding lukewarm water to fill a tub for a normal bath (about 40 gallons).
2. Put 1/4 to 1/2 cup of regular liquid bleach (for example, Clorox) into the bath water. Use 2.5 ml or 1/2 teaspoon per gallon of water if you use a portable tub. Check the bleach bottle to make sure that the concentration of bleach (also known as sodium hypochlorite) is about 6% to 8%.
3. Completely mix the added bleach in the water.
4. Have the person soak in the chlorinated water for about 10 minutes to 15 minutes, following the soak and seal method above.
5. Rinse the skin with warm, fresh water at the end of the bleach bath.
6. As soon as you're finished rinsing off, pat dry. Do not rub dry as this is the same as scratching.
7. Immediately apply any prescribed medication and always thick balms (petroleum jelly).
8. Repeat bleach baths 2 to 3 times a week if the skin is starting to flare, and once a week as maintenance.

Diluted bleach baths can potentially cause dryness or irritation in rare cases, if that is the case use white vinegar instead.

Do not:

- Use undiluted bleach directly on the skin.
- Use bleach baths if there are too many breaks or open areas in the skin (for fear of intense stinging and burning)
- Use bleach baths in people with a known contact allergy to chlorine.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Jenny Montejo, MD and Hallie O'Branovic, NP

Reviewer: Margeaux Naughton, MD

Edited by: Karelyn Munro, BA

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License](#). Last Revised 09/2020