

Wet Wrap Therapy

Wet wraps can be a useful tool in the intensive treatment of atopic dermatitis. They serve as an effective barrier to scratching and increase skin hydration/rehydration which, in turn, helps promote more restful sleep. Likewise, they act as an occlusive barrier that promotes penetration of topical corticosteroids into the skin, increasing the amount of medication delivered to the affected area(s).

Wet wraps should be reserved for severe flares and only used for a few days at a time. If overused, skin breakdown can occur, and if emollients are not used properly under the wraps, skin dryness can actually be increased. There is also concern of increased risk of steroid side effects as a result of excess absorption.

Using Wet Wraps Safely and Effectively

Before applying a wet wrap, gather the following:

- Topical steroid ointment prescribed by your provider
- Moisturizer (emollient) – we often recommend Cerave Cream or a clear, greasy ointment like Aquaphor or Vaseline
- Two layers of a wrap of your choosing: one for the wet layer and one for the dry layer

Choose a wrap that will work best to cover the part of the body you are covering. For example:

- Gauze – great for any body area, but can be expensive
- Fitted cotton pajamas – great for more widespread treatment
- 100% cotton socks – smaller socks are helpful for treating hands and/or feet; larger (adult) socks with a small hole cut in the toe can fit over an arm or leg and moved up or down as needed
- Therapeutic clothing – available online (adrescuewear.com)

Applying a wet wrap

Wet wraps are best applied after a bath and should be applied as follows:

- Apply the steroid ointment to the treatment area as directed by your provider (skip this step if a wet wrap was recommended for moisturization only). Using a tongue depressor or popsicle sticks to apply the medication will help ensure the treatment area is covered evenly, avoid contamination and prevent unnecessary exposure to the corticosteroid.
- Apply a generous amount of moisturizer (emollient) to the skin, as directed by your provider.
- Soak one layer of wrap in warm water.
- Wring out any excess water until this bottom “wet layer” is only very slightly damp.
- Wrap or cover the affected area with the “wet layer” material, ensuring that it is not too tight.
- Immediately put the “dry layer” over the “wet layer.” Do NOT cover with plastic.
- Stay in a warm environment to promote a higher degree of humidity and keep from getting cold as the water from the “wet layer” evaporates.
- Keep the wet wrap in place as directed by your provider.
- Following removal, throw away used gauze wraps. Other cotton wraps may be washed and re-used.
- Use wet wraps for three (3) days and report improvement to clinical staff. They will share the information with your provider and let you know whether the wraps should be continued.

If you have questions or concerns, please call our office at 704-235-1827.