

SOAK AND SMEAR

Soaking and Smearing

This is an aggressive treatment that is both messy and time intensive. This regimen may use a medication you have used before without success, but this medicine is being used in a different way as part of an intensive treatment regimen that *must be followed exactly* to work. This treatment can lead to marked improvement in even a couple of days. The number of nights of soaking and smearing depends on the severity of the disease and how long it takes to get it under control. Usually patients do the soaking and smearing at night for 4 nights to 2 weeks. The soaking and smearing treatments are done at night because the ointment on your skin will get on your pajamas instead of your clothes (that you wear during the daytime) and the ointment will be on your skin for several hours while you sleep. *You may wish to use an old pair of pajamas, older sheets/blankets and even make use of a mattress pad during this treatment to protect your bed from the excessive oil. Sleeping on a separate air mattress may also be an alternative.* After the skin is under control, the soaking is stopped but the nighttime smears with an ointment or moisturizer should continue.

Soak in a **bath** (not a shower) in **plain water** for **20 minutes** (use a timer) at night, then **smear immediately, without drying** the skin, with the ointment containing triamcinalone (steroid). For hand dryness and cracking, soak your hands continuously in a pan of water for 20 minutes at night and follow with the smearing as above. After the skin is under control, the soaks at night can be stopped, but continue to smear the ointment each night. Throughout the treatment period, you can apply a steroid cream to the worst areas in the morning. Soaking will allow water to go into the skin and hydrate it. Smearing on the ointment will (1) trap the water in the skin (because water cannot move through oil) and moisturize the skin and (2) allow the anti-inflammatory ingredient in the ointment to get deep into the skin.

Maintenance Treatment: Prevent Drying/Irritation

Repeated wetting (ie, baths, showers, swimming) without moisturization will actually *dry out the skin more*. So when showering or washing your hands, it is necessary to apply a moisturizer on your slightly moist skin to prevent drying. Less thick moisturizers may be used during the daytime, with petroleum jelly for more intense moisturization at night.

Using soap in the shower *can further dry out the skin* by removing the oils the skin naturally produces. You can *get clean and help your skin by limiting the use of soap* to the armpits and groin. You should then pat dry (preferably leaving some water on the skin surface) and apply moisturizer. This should be the way you shower from now on to help prevent future breakouts.

For more information please visit our website: www.pennstatehershey.org/web/dermatology/home and click on Health Information Library.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your provider at the location you were treated.
Hershey Medical Center, UPC I, Suite 100 (717) 531-6820 or Nyes Road, (717) 657-4045.
Penn State Hershey Medical Group, Colonnade Building (814)272-4445.