

# Down Syndrome Indiana™



## Ask the Expert: Dry Skin

Q: My child has very dry skin. What are the best and least expensive ways to address this problem?

**A:** I often get a number of questions about what is a good approach to fight dry skin. Dry Skin is a problem in Indiana, especially during cold weather because of the decrease in humidity associated with indoor heating. Moisturizers actually serve as barriers to evaporation (loss of water from the skin). The skin should first absorb some water in a short bath or shower (room temperature) using only a mild cleanser. If the water is too hot, the body will try to cool down by sweating, and this will actually result in more evaporation. After the skin is hydrated in room temperature water, a moisturizer should be applied to the damp skin to minimize loss of that water from the skin.

Regarding choices for moisturizers, the ones that work best are those that are the thickest (because they are the most effective in the prevention of evaporation). A specific brand is not essential. Ointments (like petroleum jelly) are more effective than thick creams which are more effective than lotions. Each individual should choose a moisturizer they are comfortable applying and then use it as often as needed. Avoid moisturizers with additives like fragrances and apply them about 2-3 times daily. With the more frequent use of hand sanitizers, a need for the use of moisturizers for the hands several times a day has arisen.

The scalp can become dry in a similar manner. “Gel” type moisturizers can be applied directly to the scalp to address this issue. OTC (over the counter – non-prescription) ketoconazole shampoo can decrease scale when it is present. Unfortunately, this particular product can cause dryness of the hair itself.

More information about this topic is available at [www.nationaleczma.org](http://www.nationaleczma.org) under the topic “bathing and moisturizing”. This information may be useful whether your child has eczema or not.

*Dr. Patricia Treadwell, M.D.  
Professor of Pediatrics  
Indiana University School of Medicine  
Riley Hospital pediatric dermatologist*

This information provided courtesy of Down Syndrome Indiana.

For More information, please contact Down Syndrome Indiana at [www.dsindiana.org](http://www.dsindiana.org)  
or call 317-925-7617.