

Skin Disorder

BIRTH DEFECT RESEARCH FOR CHILDREN



How can you recognize a Skin Disorder?

Almost every child will have a skin rash at some time. But for some children, chronic skin problems can make their lives a miserable cycle of itching, sores, scaling, redness and/or swelling.

The skin is the largest organ in the body. Persistent changes in the skin can be signals of underlying health problems, allergic conditions or damage from environmental exposures.



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What are the most common types of Skin Disorders?

Dermatitis (eczema): The skin is inflamed with redness, swelling and itching. Severe cases may have bumpy areas that ooze, crust over and scale. Children with certain allergic or immunological disorders are more likely to have dermatitis.

Contact Dermatitis: Eczema caused by skin exposure to irritating soaps, detergents, chemicals, and plants like poison ivy and oak. Certain skin medications and chemicals used to put a perma-press finish on clothes and tanning agents for shoes may also cause contact dermatitis.

Atopic Dermatitis: A chronic itching skin inflammation which is most common in children who have a family history of allergic problems like hay fever and asthma. The condition can begin in the first few months of life with weeping, crusted lesions on the face, scalp, arms and/or legs. Atopic dermatitis usually disappears by the time the child is three or four years old, but may come back during later childhood, adolescence or adulthood. Temperature and humidity changes, wool clothing, skin infections, food allergies and emotional stress can make atopic dermatitis worse.

Fungal Infections: Small plant-like organisms called fungi invade the surface tissues of the skin, nails and/or hair. The fungi may cause itching and scaling that comes and goes. Once a child develops a fungal infection, it may return again and again. Several common types of fungal skin infections are scalp ringworm, athlete's foot, jock itch, and nail fungus. Although medications are helpful in controlling these skin conditions, they may not always provide a cure.

Yeast (candida) Infections: Candida is a common fungal infection which may affect the skin and mucous membranes. Candida organisms can become troublesome when a child's normal body defense system is weakened. Children who have diabetes, endocrine disorders, immunological disorders or other underlying health problems may have chronic candida infections. Treatment with antibiotics and corticosteroids may also make some children

susceptible to yeast infections. Candida infections in babies occur in the mouth (thrush) or in the diaper area. Recurrent ear and sinus problems in children may sometimes be traced to a candida problem. Yeast infections can be controlled with certain antibiotics, but for the best results underlying health problems must be treated.

Tinea Versicolor: A fungal skin infection that causes itching from small scaling spots or patches that can vary in color from white to brown. The spots appear most often on the chest, neck and abdomen. Tinea versicolor is common in young adults and may be more noticeable in the summer because the lighter spots do not tan. Tinea versicolor can be diagnosed with a special light called a Wood's Lamp which causes the spots to glow in a dark room. Special skin shampoos can be used to treat the condition.

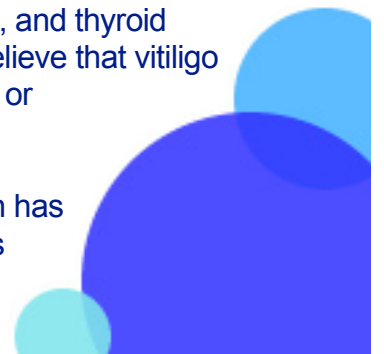
Acne: A skin condition that is often at its worse during the hormonal changes of adolescence. A combination of plugged oil glands, bacteria and hormonal activity are thought to cause acne. Acne can be a mild condition with a few black heads and pimples that respond to proper cleansing and diet or a severe condition with large infection-filled cysts that can cause scarring. Even the most serious cases of acne may respond to medications that are now available.

Chloracne: A severe acne-like skin disorder which is caused by exposure to dioxin and chlorine compounds.

Disorders of Skin Color:

Hypopigmentation (vitiligo): A skin condition with spots or patches of skin that do not have any coloring. Vitiligo may be associated with other diseases like diabetes, Addison's Disease, and thyroid dysfunction. Researchers believe that vitiligo may have an immunological or neurochemical basis.

Hyperpigmentation: The skin has dark brown patches or areas that are usually caused by underlying problems like



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Addison's Disease or hormonal changes.

Helping your child with their Skin Disorders

Medical: Children with chronic skin problems should be evaluated by a medical professional. Two specialties that can diagnose and treat skin diseases are dermatologists and allergists.

Dermatologist: A doctor who specializes in all kinds of skin disorders. A dermatologist can diagnose and treat skin conditions caused by infections, fungi, viruses, and environmental agents.

Allergist: A physician who specializes in allergic illness including skin disorders. An allergist can test a child to discover a possible allergic origin of skin problems. Allergy treatments including allergy shots, medications and diet may help some allergic rashes.

Stress Reduction: Almost any chronic disorder may become worse when a child is under stress. You can help your child keep skin problems under control by teaching them to cope with school, social and family stress.

Diet: Food allergies may contribute to allergic dermatitis. Planning an allergy diet that rotates food groups every four or five days may help your child control food allergy related skin problems.

Will your child outgrow Skin Problems?

Some skin problems can be cured with medications or by avoiding the cause of the condition. Childhood atopic dermatitis and adolescent acne may disappear as the child gets older. Other chronic skin problems may be managed with appropriate treatment.

Fact Sheet by:

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