

Health Facts

Diluted bleach baths for children with atopic dermatitis (eczema)

What are diluted bleach baths?

Diluted bleach baths are used to treat children with infected eczema and children who have repeated skin infections. The baths reduce the number of bacteria on the skin and the severity of the infection.

Diluted bleach baths are often used in combination with other eczema treatments to relieve itching and treat infection. These may include bath oils, emollients (moisturisers), wet wraps and antibiotics.

How safe are diluted bleach baths for use with eczema?

Diluted bleach baths are very safe. Research has shown that diluted bleach baths can be used for young children without any side effects. The final concentration of bleach when diluted in water is just a little stronger than chlorinated swimming pool water. If your child experiences any irritation, stop using the bleach baths and discuss with the treating doctor.

What you will need:

- bath oil (2-3 capfuls per bath)
- 45 mL of household bleach (e.g. White King bleach) containing 4.2% sodium hypochlorite added to a quarter-full bath tub of water (40 litres of water)
- fresh, clean towels.

How to perform a diluted bleach bath

1. Fill bath tub with lukewarm water (ensure water is not hot).
2. Add bath oil to bath water.
3. Add 45mL bleach to the bath water.
 - a. Wash the face and scalp whilst bathing.
 - b. If crusts are on the skin gently soak them off in the bath.
 - c. Your child can soak in bath for up to 10 minutes.
 - d. You do not have to rinse after bathing.
4. Using a fresh towel pat the skin dry. Do not rub as this can irritate the skin and cause itch. Use fresh towels for every bath.
5. Apply moisturiser (emollient) liberally to the whole body immediately after getting out of the bath.
6. If a steroid has been prescribed, apply the steroid as directed by the doctor before the moisturiser.

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How often should my child have a diluted bleach bath?

Diluted bleach baths are usually prescribed twice a week by a doctor or specialist nurse.

Points to remember

- Measure the bleach accurately to achieve the right concentration to treat the infected eczema.
- Do not share towels amongst family members.
- Wash towels and bedding in hot water regularly.

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