

## **Bleach Baths**

Itching, scratching and the immune dysregulation of atopic dermatitis lead to an increased risk of infection from superficial skin flora, especially *Staphylococcus aureus*. One technique that can help decrease the number of infections and possibly reduce the need for antibiotics in patients with eczema is called "Bleach Baths." Here are our simple recommendations: Explain to the patient that swimming pools are chlorinated to help cut-down on microbes living in the water. Together, you will "make your very own swimming pool" right in the bathtub! This special water will help cut down on microbes on the skin.

### **STEPS:**

1. Start by adding lukewarm water to fill a tub for a normal bath (about 40 gallons).
2. Put common liquid bleach (for example, Clorox) into the bath water. Check the bleach bottle to make sure that the concentration of bleach (also known as sodium hypochlorite) is about 8.25%. Amounts as below:
  - a. Standard 40 gallon bathtub: 1/3 cup
  - b. ½ tub or 20 gallons of water: 1/6 cup (3 ½ tablespoons)
  - c. 5 gallon baby bathtub: 2 Teaspoons
3. Completely mix the added bleach in the water. This should create a solution of diluted bleach (about 0.005%), which is just a little stronger than chlorinated swimming pool water.
4. Soak in the chlorinated water for about 10 minutes.
5. Thoroughly rinse the skin clear with lukewarm, fresh water at the end of the bleach bath.
6. As soon as you're finished rinsing off, pat dry. Do not rub dry as this is the same as scratching!
7. Immediately apply any prescribed medication and/or emollients.
8. Repeat bleach baths 2 to 3 times a week or as prescribed by the physician.

### **The following restrictions may apply:**

- Do not use undiluted bleach directly on the skin. Even diluted bleach baths can potentially cause dryness and/or irritation.
- Do not use bleach baths if there are many breaks or open areas in the skin (for fear of intense stinging and burning)
- Do not use bleach baths in patients with a known contact allergy to chlorine.