Atopic Dermatitis: A Guide to Bathing

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1. How often and for how long should you bathe or shower?
   - There are no comparative studies that clarify the optimal frequency and duration of bathing for people with atopic dermatitis
   - Physicians generally recommend a bath or shower at least once per day for a short period of time (eg, 5-10 minutes)

2. What is the best water temperature to use?
   - Lukewarm water
   - Avoid extreme temperatures (very hot or very cold)

3. What is the best way to cleanse your skin?
   - Gentle cleansing
   - Avoid vigorous scrubbing of the skin
   - Do not use washcloths, loofahs, or brushes to clean the skin

4. What type of product should be used to clean the skin?
   - A gentle cleansing bar or wash without fragrances or dyes
   - A non-soap cleanser with a low-pH (less than 5.5). The pH of normal skin is 4.0-5.5, while the average pH of soap is 9.0-10.5; therefore, a lower pH cleanser may help to avoid skin irritation.
   - Sometimes you may want to limit the use of soap to reduce possible skin irritation, especially when your eczema is flaring.

5. What does cleansing remove from your skin?
   - Natural oils produced by your skin (sebum)
   - Environmental dirt, allergens, and irritants
   - Dead skin cells (desquamated keratinocytes)
   - Skincare products, medications, moisturizers, cosmetics, etc.
6. **How does water affect your skin?**
   - Water hydrates, softens, and cleanses the skin
   - It can irritate and dry the skin when you do not moisturize after a bath or shower

7. **What is important to do right after a bath or shower?**
   - Lightly pat yourself dry with a towel without completely drying your skin (do not rub or scrub the skin)
   - Apply any topical medications recommended by your physician
   - Moisturize your skin in order to maintain hydration

8. **What are some other types of baths that my doctor may recommend and why are they important?**
   **Bleach Baths** – reduce the risk of superficial skin infections by decreasing the bacteria on the skin
   - It is like soaking in a swimming pool!
   - Pour 60 mL (≈ ¼ cup) of liquid bleach (sodium hypochlorite 6%) into a full bathtub of water
   - Soak for 10 minutes, then rinse the skin with fresh lukewarm water

   **Salt Baths** – may help to reduce irritation and discomfort that occurs when bathing while skin is very inflamed and irritated
   - Add 240 mL (≈ 1 cup) of table salt to a full bathtub of water