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## DYSHIDROTIC ECZEMA

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Dyshidrotic eczema is a common disorder that affects the hands and feet. The exact cause is NOT known, but it is frequently seen in persons who have a predilection toward eczema. The condition may be mild with only a little peeling, or very severe with big blisters and cracks that are so uncomfortable that the person cannot work.

The first (acute) stage shows tiny blisters deep in the skin, associated with itching and burning sensations. The later and more chronic stage shows more peeling, cracking, or crusting. Some people will have mostly one stage, and some patients will have mostly the other. Sometimes both stages occur at the same time.

The condition does not have any quick sure cure, and often runs a chronic course, but sometimes it does go away for long periods. Many times this condition seems to come on after a period of physical or emotional stress.

### What is the treatment for dyshidrotic eczema?

The treatment depends on the stage and severity of the condition.

- In the **acute**, blistering stage, cold compresses used for 15 - 30 minutes four times a day may help to dry up the blisters. Following the soaks, these areas should be dried and the medicated cream should be applied.
- In the **chronic** stage, steroid creams or ointments help to reduce inflammation and itching, and speed recovery.
- Sometimes cortisone-like preparations are used by tablet or injection, but should be used only in **severe cases**. Although it will clear the problem like magic for a short time, the disease may flare up even worse after the medication is stopped, and long-term treatment with this medication may lead to some serious, undesirable side effects.
- Sometimes the affected areas may become secondarily infected with bacteria at the site of the cracks or broken blisters. If this happens, your doctor will use appropriate additional treatment.

**Remember:** even though this condition is not curable with the methods we now have available, satisfactory control can be obtained by the treatments outlined. Most people sooner or later have less and less trouble, and as time goes on the eruption subsides.