

Patient information

Dry Skin (Anhydrosis) and Skin Fissures

What is dry skin?

Normal skin is made up of 10% water. With dry skin, this is much less and is known as anhydrosis. This is common and can happen to anyone but more so with ageing, psoriasis, eczema, some medical conditions or can be due to the effect of a medication you may be taking.

Symptoms include roughness of the skin, itching, tightening of the skin and cracking particularly around the heel of the feet.



What can you do to help?

- Using a simple moisturiser on your feet every day (ideally morning and night) can help the signs of dryness; they can increase the water content of the skin or help retain water in the skin. Emulsifying ointment or Aqueous cream is often sufficient – it needn't be a specific foot cream.
- Moisturiser is most easily absorbed about 10 minutes after you have had a bath or shower. Apply it all over the foot – but not between the toes. Rub in well and wipe of any excess.
- Other therapies include soaking the feet in an oily water foot bath (for example Baby Oil).
- For an intensive overnight treatment, thickly apply petroleum jelly, wrap cling film over the feet loosely (so the petroleum jelly can only soak in) and go to bed with a pair of cotton socks.
- Heel balms specifically for dry cracked heels may be purchased over the counter and can be helpful.
- A pumice stone can help to remove dead dry skin from your feet. Dip the pumice stone in warm water, gently move the stone in circular motion around the feet. Apply moisturiser

afterwards. NB: If you have an injured or sore area to the foot do not use a pumice stone on the feet.

What are skin Fissures?

Fissures or splits occur when there is a lack of elasticity in the skin, usually when the skin is too dry or too moist.



When fissures are caused because you have sweaty feet, then the treatment is to limit the amount of moisture.

This can be done by swabbing the whole foot with Surgical Spirit daily.

If the feet are excessively sweaty your GP can prescribe topical agents i.e. Anhydrol Forte to control the moisture.

When fissures are due to very dry skin, then use a foot file / pumice regularly to limit the build up of hard skin. Using a moisturizing cream daily will also help to soften the skin, as well as improve the elasticity.

What are heel fissures?

Heel fissures due to very dry skin are more common in the summer. This is due to the hotter weather and wearing sandals with open backs. When the heel sits on the back of the sandal it can be squashed and pinched over the outer edge of the sole of the shoe. To avoid this, ensure that the heel seat of your sandal is wide enough to accommodate your heel.



If the skin is split, then cover the area with a clean / sterile dressing such as Melolin or gauze until it has healed.

For more information

If you require any assistance then please contact
Podiatry services on
0300 1314536

Or email

Esh-tr.podiatryenquiries@nhs.net

Sources of information.

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust <https://www.esht.nhs.uk/service/podiatry/>
The Health and Care Professions Council www.hcpc-uk.org
The Royal College of Podiatry www.cop.uk
NHS choices www.nhs.uk

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4500 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
Elaine Tate Head of Podiatry and Orthotics Services, Podiatry Clinical and Team Leads

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
Community Health & Integrated Care

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