

Intertrigo Care and Prevention:

Intertrigo is a term used to describe the irritation that results from damp, warm skin that is under frictional forces. Frequent sites of intertrigo include the crease under the breasts, the armpits, groin and the fold between the abdomen and thighs. Intertrigo can be very itchy and even tender. These locations are often difficult to keep dry. Frequent washing and thorough drying is important to avoid intertrigo as well as the growth of yeasts which thrive in warm wet areas.

If you have an active case of intertrigo we will often prescribe the following:

1. Gently bath the area, **DO NOT SCRUB**. Use a gentle soap (for sensitive skin)...an antibacterial soap is **not** necessary and can often be too harsh.

Vinegar, in a diluted form, can be a good way to decrease the burden of fungi or bacteria on your skin. The solution is a 1:20 mix, i.e. $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar to 5 cups water. You may soak the affected area twice daily. If a tub is not possible then use a bucket and clean cloth to saturate the area. If your condition is severe and you have cuts and fissures you may want to consider a **saline soak** which is more soothing. A saline solution can be made by dissolving 2 teaspoons of salt into a quart of warm water.

2. Blot and air dry the skin folds well. Using a fan or hair dryer on a cool setting may be helpful. Apply the prescribed cream or ointment sparingly (often a low strength cortisone cream). Topical steroids should be used with care in these areas. Initial use of twice a day is recommended in the first days or weeks of therapy but their use should be tapered to once a day and then only as needed. If you have been diagnosed as having a yeast infection as well then you may have an additional cream to apply.

Steps to avoid reoccurrence of intertrigo:

As above, avoid aggressive bathing techniques. A periodic diluted vinegar soak (once or twice a week) is helpful as is applying a thin layer of a skin protectant such as Zinc Oxide paste or Desitin diaper ointment. Generous amounts of **corn starch powder** or **Zeasorb powder** will also cut down on the amount of moisture in the area. An occasional application of a low strength steroid cream is usually safe however people should be aware that it can cause side effects (usually after several months of use) such as thinning of the skin (which can cause "stretch marks") and the appearance of small red blood vessels.