Your dermatologist has advised you to take “bleach baths” to help you avoid skin infections. This handout explains what a bleach bath is and how to prepare one.

Scratching can create small breaks in your skin. If you have immune system changes from atopic dermatitis (eczema) or some other skin conditions, scratching increases your risk of skin infection from bacteria. You may be able to lower the number of infections and reduce the need for antibiotics by taking "bleach baths."

Most swimming pools use chlorine to help reduce the bacteria and other germs in the water. With a bleach bath, you will make your very own swimming pool, right in the bathtub! This special water will help reduce the germs on your skin.

How to Create a Bleach Bath

Follow these steps to prepare your bleach bath:

1. Add lukewarm water to fill the tub, as you would for a normal bath (about 40 gallons).
2. Put ¼ to ½ cup of common liquid bleach (such as Clorox) into the bath water. Check the label on the bleach to make sure the concentration of bleach (sodium hypochlorite) is about 6%.
3. Stir the water, making sure to mix the bleach in well. This will create a solution of diluted bleach (about 0.005%), which is just a little stronger than swimming pool water.
4. Soak in your bleach bath for about 15 minutes.
5. After the bath, take a shower to rinse the bleach off your skin. Make sure you rinse well.
6. As soon as you are done rinsing, pat your skin dry. Do not rub dry – rubbing is the same as scratching!
7. Apply any prescribed medicines and/or ointments to your skin right away.

Take a bleach bath 2 to 3 times a week, or as recommended by your dermatologist.
Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Dermatology Center:
206-598-5065

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Cautions

- Do not put undiluted bleach directly on your skin. It can damage your skin.
- Do not use bleach baths if you have many breaks or open areas in your skin. Bleach can make damaged skin sting and burn.
- Do not take bleach baths if you are allergic to chlorine.

Warnings

- Bleach baths may make your skin dry or irritated. To prevent this, apply your medicine right away after patting dry.
- Bleach will change the color of any fabric it touches, such as your clothes, bath towels, and bath mats. Take precautions, such as using a white towel. And, be careful not to splash the bleach on your skin or clothing when you are adding it to the tub.
- Bleach may also affect the finish of a ceramic tub over time.