**Skin care advice for patients on immunotherapy treatment\***

Your skin is an important organ which works hard to protect you from the elements, diseases and infections, therefore, it is important that we take measures to look after it.

**Immunotherapy treatments** can cause inflammation throughout the body. For example, patients may experience skin inflammation as pigment changes, a rash and/or itchy skin.

**What is a Rash?**

A rash is an area of irritated skin. It can be a side effect of some cancer treatments, such as immunotherapy. There can be many different symptoms of a rash, including red raised areas, red spots, and/or itching. Rashes tend to be mild to moderate. However, some people have severe rashes that cause major discomfort and changes to their appearance.

**What should I do if I get a rash?**

If you get a rash during immunotherapy treatment, you should seek advice via the hotline for assessment, as intervention may be required. Avoid scratching it. This information can help your health care team make treatment decisions about your rash.

**How is a rash treated?**

For a mild rash, we may recommend an over-the-counter or prescription-strength corticosteroid cream that you rub into the skin to reduce inflammation. If the rash is moderate or severe, covering a large part of the body, this may be treated with corticosteroid to take by mouth, such as prednisolone. Antihistamine tablets can help with itching. Sometimes, your immunotherapy treatment may be stopped for a short time or adjusted to a lower dose.

If these steps don’t work, your doctor may recommend that you see a dermatologist, a doctor who specializes in skin conditions.

**Useful tips for keeping your skin healthy during immunotherapy treatment.**

Here are some useful tips for keeping your skin healthy during immunotherapy treatment;

* Eat a well-balanced diet- aim for a good mix of foods rich in vitamins and minerals combined with a protein, carbohydrates and a small amount of fat.
* Ensure you have an adequate fluid intake and avoid excessive alcohol intake.
* Ensure adequate sun protection- wear a sun hat and sun glasses in hot weather and cover up. Apply sun cream which has a high sun protection factor (SPF) and apply regularly throughout the day. Wear loose cotton clothing.
* Smoking can cause damage to healthy tissue therefore many resources are available to help you to stop smoking.
* Consider factors that may cause dry skin, reduce frequency of bathing and use lukewarm water to avoid exposing your skin to direct heat.
* Wash your skin and use a moisturiser but avoid excessive scrubbing which may irritate your skin. Too much washing strips the skin of essential oils which then dries it out.
* Bath oil and non-perfume emollients should be used to substitute standard soaps.
* Ensure non perfumed moisturiser or emollients are used (e.g. cetraben/ E45) to keep skin well hydrated. Apply an emollient liberally and often, particularly shortly after bathing and if skin is itchy. The drier the skin, the thicker this should be, especially on the hands.
* Over the counter anti histamines can be used to manage a mild skin itch.

It is **important** that if you develop a skin rash, which is not relieved with the simple methods discussed above or develop a skin itch which disrupts your sleep pattern **then you must contact the team at your Cancer Centre for prompt assessment.**

Following the simple steps above and reporting symptoms early can lead to better management of this potential immunotherapy side effect if this does occur.

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