

NUMMULAR DERMATITIS

Nummular Dermatitis is a common skin problem, which is a type of eczema. The word nummular means coin shaped and this eruption tends to produce round, nickel or dime sized patches on the arms and legs. It tends to be worse in the wintertime because of dry skin and the low relative humidity at that time. This skin problem often improves on its own in the spring and summer time. Many patients who have nummular dermatitis have a history of eczema or other dry skin problems when they were younger. In addition there is often a family history of eczema, allergies, hay fever or asthma.

The three main principles of treatment are the use of mild soap, moisturizers and the prescription ointments, which I will provide. Mild soaps include bar soaps such as Dove, Purpose, or Basis and liquid soaps such as Moisturel, Neutrogena, or Cetaphil. It is important to keep your skin moisturized daily, especially after the bath or shower. The moisturizer you use is up to you since they are all effective.

The prescription ointments are the best control for nummular eczema. Most of these products are cortisone compounds, which come in many different strengths. You can think of creams that are one horsepower in strength versus one thousand-horse power in strength. The low strength cortisone creams are usually applied to the face, armpits, groin, or rectal area. The higher strength creams are reserved for the arms, legs, and body. Please do not mix up the creams since the higher strength creams can produce side effects if used in the wrong area for a prolonged period of time.

The prescription cream for your nummular dermatitis should be applied once a day initially. As the problem improves the frequency of application should be decreased to once every other day and then less often such as once or twice per week. In this way your skin does not become used to the cream so that if it is needed in the future the cream will still work.

Treatment for nummular dermatitis controls the skin condition. There may be a tendency for the rash to come back at some point in the future. If the problem would return then the prescription ointment could be restarted once a day and again slowly discontinued. Many people find that they have mild outbreaks on a seasonal basis such as the winter or summer.

If you have any other questions about this condition, please ask me.