

SKIN CARE (Dr Ian Gordon)

Prolonged swimming in chlorinated water has a drying effect on the skin and this can make it itchy. Some people seem more susceptible than others particularly if a person suffers from eczema. A few people are generally allergic to chlorine and even ozone pools have small amounts.

A few suggestions for skin care:

1. Dehydration makes skin more likely to be damaged by chlorine as it breaks down its natural defences so ensure you drink plenty of water during a training session and ensure the urine is never darker than light yellow.
2. After competing a training session spend several minutes in the showers to ensure that the skin has been thoroughly washed with fresh water and no chlorine is bound to the skin surface.
3. Similarly wash costumes thoroughly as soon as possible after the swim, not only will they last longer but also rashes are often worse under the costume.
4. Pay particular care to those areas of skin where there is chaffing or rubbing and protect these areas with Vaseline as these areas are particularly susceptible.
5. In some pools the chlorine concentration seems particularly high and it may be worth seeing which local pools 'suits' best.
6. Most importantly it is worth using an emollient that will hydrate the skin, keep it soft and in good condition. The cheapest is Aqueous cream but more effective ones are E45 cream and there are others e.g. Dermol which can be applied as a lotion. Your pharmacist can supply these; they can be applied liberally as soon as possible after the swim, repeated as often as necessary and rubbed in thoroughly. Lanolin based ones are probably best avoided as a few people are allergic to these.
7. If there are some very dry eczematous patches 0.5% hydrocortisone can be bought from your local chemist. Applied twice daily this will soon clear up the patch with no risk of skin atrophy. Any worse than this you will need to see your own GP.