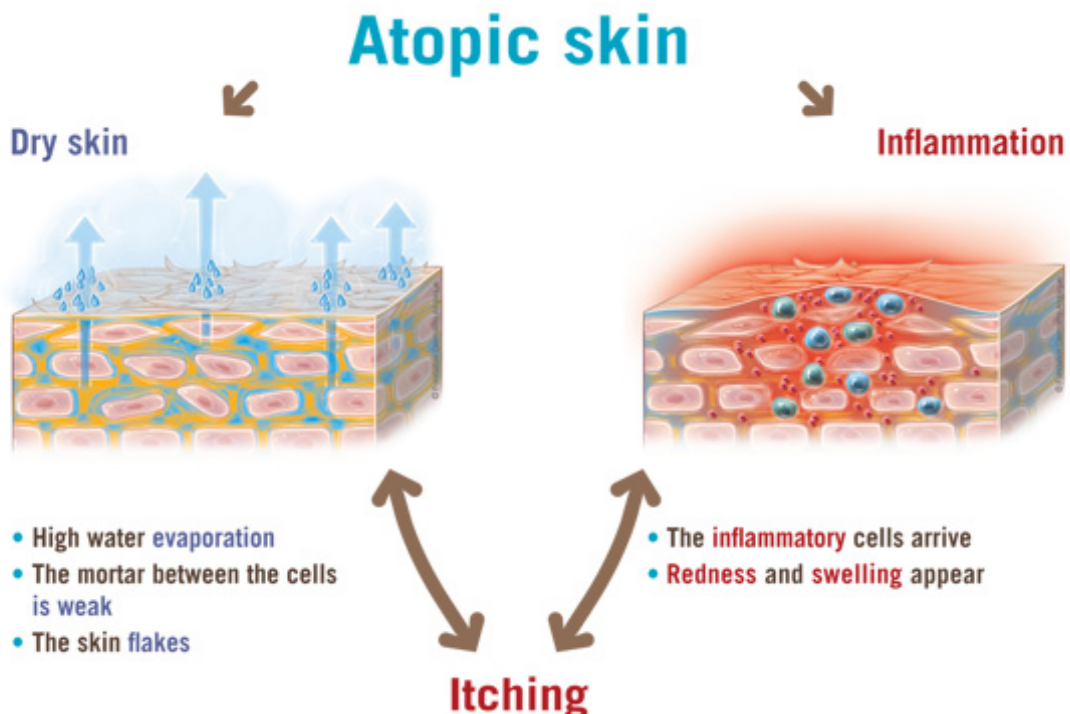


NEURODERMATITIS/LICHEN SIMPLEX CHRONICUS:

Neurodermatitis is a skin condition that starts with a patch of itchy skin. Scratching makes it even itchier. This itch-scratch cycle causes the affected skin to become thick and leathery. You may develop several itchy spots, typically on the neck, wrist, forearm, thigh or ankle.



Neurodermatitis — also known as lichen simplex chronicus — is not life-threatening or contagious. But the itching can be so intense or recurrent that it disrupts your sleep, sexual function and quality of life.



Breaking the itch-scratch cycle of neurodermatitis is challenging. Treatment success depends on resisting the urge to rub or scratch the affected areas. Over-the-counter and prescription creams can

help ease the itching. You'll also need to identify and eliminate factors that may be aggravating the problem.

Signs and symptoms of neurodermatitis include:

- **An itchy skin patch or patches**
- **Leathery or scaly texture on the affected areas**
- **A raised, rough patch or patches that are red or darker than the rest of your skin**

The condition involves areas that can be reached for scratching — the head, neck, wrist, forearm, ankle, vulva, scrotum or anus. The itchiness, which can be intense, may come and go or be nonstop. You may scratch out of habit and while sleeping.

When to see a doctor

See your doctor if:

- **You catch yourself repeatedly scratching the same patch of skin**
- **The itch prevents you from sleeping or focusing on your daily routines**
- **Your skin becomes painful or looks infected**

Causes

The exact cause of neurodermatitis isn't known. Sometimes neurodermatitis begins with something that simply rubs or irritates the skin, such as tight clothing or a bug bite. As you rub or scratch the area, it gets itchier. The more you scratch, the more it itches.

In some cases, neurodermatitis is associated with other skin conditions — such as dry skin, eczema or psoriasis. Stress and anxiety can trigger itching too.

Risk factors

Certain factors may affect your risk of neurodermatitis, including:

- **Your sex and age. Women are more likely to develop neurodermatitis than are men. The condition is most common between ages 30 and 50.**

- **Other skin conditions.** People with a personal or family history of dermatitis, eczema, psoriasis or similar skin conditions are more likely to develop neurodermatitis.
- **Anxiety disorders.** Anxiety and stress can trigger the itch associated with neurodermatitis.

Complications

Persistent scratching can lead to a wound, a bacterial skin infection, or permanent scars and changes in skin colour. Scratching may also disrupt your sleep.