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SKIN CONDITIONS:

Wounds:

Small injuries from trauma are readily managed at home. Proper treatment is important for healing and to prevent infection. Of course, if severe, attention in the emergency room is important, but simple steps can be taken at home to manage these issues:

- Compress the area and stop the bleeding. Be patient. This can take several minutes.
- Cleansing: If the injured area is dirty, gently rinse with water, again being patient and cleansing the area thoroughly. A little soap (any type) can be used to clean the area.
- Deeper cleaning: Application of hydrogen peroxide is OK in an effort to clean the wound more thoroughly, but this is best use just for the first cleansing and not on an ongoing basis as it irritates and injures the skin, preventing healing over time.

Dry Skin:

I'm often asked for the best creams for dry skin and best treatments. I don't know that these are the best, but general recommendations include:

Gentle/Effective Soap: I recommend Dove Bar Soap (not the liquid) or Cetaphil Liquid cleanser (in the bottle)

Creams: There are a variety of creams, but I generally recommend Vanicreme. This is a good moisturizing cream and is inexpensive and generally available.

Excessive Bruising:

As we age, our skin becomes more sensitive to injuries and bruising. This is commonplace and expected. If results from thinning of the skin and accumulation of damage to capillaries from sun exposure. Generally, such bruising is not a sign of any serious medical illness, and is to be ignored.

Other factors that can contribute to excess bruising and which can be stopped if possible:

Blood thinners:

Aspirin, Coumadin, Plavix, and Pradaxa readily thin out the blood and promote bruising. Stopping such medication is a consideration if being done for routine 'prevention' reasons, but if you have a medical condition that requires these medications, do not stop them on your own.

Steroid Creams and Nose Sprays:

Steroid creams and sprays are absorbed into the body and can have an effect throughout the entire body to a small degree. They can make capillaries more fragile, and if you are using these creams or sprays, perhaps reducing the dose.

Cosmetics and Skin Creams (non-prescription)

Various topicals can have 'aspirin-like' compounds in them. They will not list this in their ingredients, but they can contribute to bruising. If bruising has developed or increased since trying a new cosmetic product, it may be useful to eliminate the product for 2 weeks to see if bruising improves.

Rashes:

Rashes are skin inflammation that can be caused by many and various processes. Allergic reaction is usually the most common, but there is so much variety here that it is impossible to mention all the various types and causes.

That said, RIBS (red itchy bumps) or hives (itchy patches) can be treated with home efforts using:

- **Antihistamines:** Any of the antihistamine medications can help with this issue. I prefer the non-sedating antihistamines such as Claritan (loratadine), Allegra, or Zyrtec. In addition, Benedryl and Chlortrimeton can also be used, but they tend to cause sleepiness, so do be aware of this. Look at packages for dosing instructions.
- **Topicals:** Steroid containing creams (Cortaid 10...over the counter) or prescription steroids (Triamcinalone 0.1% is my favorite) are also useful. Apply a small amount to the area topically and repeat twice daily if needed.

Minor Burns:

Burns can happen by accident at any time and can be cause for concern if extensive or if significant amounts of skin are lost or slough. Most minor burns at home can be treated with simple measures

Minor/First Degree Burns:

Generally these cover a small area of the skin, about the size of a CD case, and are red and very painful. Cool compresses are all that is needed to deal with these or soaking in cool water for pain relief (particularly fingers or hands). Wash gently with soap and water and then Aloe Vera, moisturizing cream (Vanicreme, Eucerin Cream), or Cortaid 10 cream can be used for comfort. . Burn Gel (over the counter) is a comforting topical available at the local pharmacy. It also helps treating and in relieving pain.

Minor/First Degree Burns with Blisters:

If the blisters are not ruptured, leave them intact.

Treat as above, wash with soap and water and use cool compresses or mildly cool tap water to relieve pain

If there are areas where skin is lost, you may apply some topical ointment to the areas. I prefer Bacitracin ointment. Either leave open or cover with a non-stick gauze and wrap with with paper tape or Coban

Skin Tears:

As we age, skin becomes thinner and more fragile, resulting in tearing with minor bumps or injuries. When the skin separates from the underlying tissues, a large defect can be created and there can be a good bit of bleeding

To treat at home.....try rinsing the area with cool tap water and then gently push the flap of skin back over the open area, using your fingertip or a Q-tip. Once it is reapproximated as best you can, you can either:

- Place Steri-Strips over the torn skin to keep it in place. This is a special tape product available at the pharmacy. Once placed on the skin, it is left there until over a few days to a week, it slowly sloughs off with washing. Do not try to remove it with pull or you will tear the skin again
- Alternatively, you can apply some topical antibiotic ointment like Bacitracin, over the open area and then cover with a non-stick pad and wrap, changing the dressing daily (see Dressings on page ???)
- Do not use a Band-Aid over this area. When you have to remove it it will cause worse skin tearing.

- Do not use a dry gauze over this area. When the blood dries on it and you have to remove it it will cause worse skin tearing.