



Ichthyosis Fact Sheet

What is Ichthyosis?

Ichthyosis is a family of genetic skin diseases characterized by dry, thickened or thin, scaling skin. In some forms of ichthyosis, the natural shedding process is slowed or inhibited, while in others the production of skin cells is faster than normal. Dermatologists estimate that there are at least twenty varieties of ichthyosis, with a wide range of severity and associated symptoms.

What Causes Ichthyosis?

Ichthyosis is the result of a genetic mutation passed from parent to child. In some rare cases, the genetic mutation occurs spontaneously in the affected person. Ichthyosis is not contagious.

How Many People Have It?

Ichthyosis affects more than one million Americans. Ichthyosis comes in many forms, ranging from mildly dry skin to intense scaling, cracked, and thick skin. The more severe types are rare.

What are the Symptoms of Ichthyosis?

Ichthyosis is usually present at conception and it is obvious at birth that something is wrong with the baby's skin. However, in some cases the symptoms do not become apparent until sometime during the first year of a child's life.

Symptoms of ichthyosis range widely depending on the type of ichthyosis involved. Some symptoms include: extremely dry skin; constant build-up of scales; dehydration; itchy skin; difficulty sweating; thinning hair; protruded eyelids; and increased risk of infection. Ichthyosis can be a disfiguring disease and has numerous social and psychological implications.

How is Ichthyosis Treated? Is There A Cure?

There is no cure for ichthyosis, only treatments to help manage the symptoms.

What Can I Do To Help?

Support research on ichthyosis, improved treatments, and education of the public about the disease and its symptoms by donating to the important work of the Foundation. Because ichthyosis is a rare condition, many people, including doctors, simply do not know what it is.

What is FIRST?

The Foundation for Ichthyosis & Related Skin Types,[®] is a national non-profit organization founded in 1981, that offers information, education, advocacy, and support services to persons affected with ichthyosis and their families. The Foundation funds research into finding the causes, better treatments and a cure for ichthyosis. To receive more information about contributing to or becoming a member of the Foundation, please call 800.545.3286 or visit www.firstskinfoundation.org.