

Menopause and Ichthyosis

Overview

Menopause is a natural stage of life when the ovaries stop releasing eggs and hormone levels—especially estrogen—decline. These changes can affect many parts of the body, including the skin. For individuals with **ichthyosis**, menopause may bring new skin challenges or changes in how symptoms appear or respond to treatment. Understanding what to expect and how to care for your skin can help you stay comfortable and healthy during this transition.

How Menopause Affects the Skin

- **Decreased estrogen** leads to a loss of skin moisture, elasticity, and thickness.
 - **Dryness and itching** often increase, even in those without ichthyosis.
 - People with ichthyosis may notice **more scaling, tightness, or cracking**, especially on the arms, legs, and torso.
 - The skin barrier may become more fragile, increasing the risk of irritation or infection.
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Managing Skin Changes

Moisturizing

- Continue regular use of **thick emollients and ointments**—products containing **petrolatum, ceramides, glycerin, or urea (5–10%)** can help retain moisture.
- **Apply immediately after bathing** to lock in hydration.
- Use **gentle, fragrance-free cleansers** and avoid long, hot showers.

Bathing and Exfoliation

- Regular soaking and gentle exfoliation can help manage scaling.
- Adding bath oils or using a soft washcloth can reduce irritation.
- Avoid harsh scrubs or acids that may damage thinning postmenopausal skin.

Clothing and Environment

- Choose **soft, breathable fabrics** like cotton or bamboo.
- Use a **humidifier** during dry months to maintain moisture in the air.
- Stay hydrated—**drinking water** helps skin from the inside out.

Hormones and Treatment Options

- **Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)** can relieve some menopause symptoms and may slightly improve skin dryness for some people.
- HRT is not right for everyone; talk to your healthcare provider about risks and benefits.
- Some people benefit from **topical estrogen creams** (for vaginal or localized dryness) under medical supervision.

Medications and Skincare Adjustments

- If you take **oral retinoids (like acitretin)**, your provider may adjust your dose if dryness or irritation worsens.
- Avoid over-the-counter anti-aging creams with **retinol or strong acids**, which can cause irritation.
- Continue to use **sunscreen daily**—menopausal skin can become more sensitive to UV damage.

Bone and Joint Health

People with ichthyosis who also experience **limited mobility or chronic inflammation** should be mindful that menopause increases the risk of **bone loss (osteoporosis)**.

- Get **adequate calcium and vitamin D**.
- Engage in **weight-bearing exercise** if possible.
- Ask your doctor about bone density screening.

Emotional and Mental Well-Being

- Hormonal changes, hot flashes, and sleep disruption can add to emotional stress.
- Living with ichthyosis already involves daily management—menopause can make that routine feel more challenging.
- Seek support from **FIRST's Peer Navigator Program** or others in the ichthyosis community who understand these experiences.
- Consider speaking with a therapist if mood changes or body image concerns arise.

When to Contact Your Doctor

- If you notice **new or worsening scaling, cracking, or redness**.
- If your **usual moisturizers or treatments stop working**.
- For guidance on **safe menopause symptom treatments**, including HRT, supplements, or alternative therapies.

Helpful Resources

- **FIRST – Foundation for Ichthyosis & Related Skin Types**
www.firstskinfoundation.org
Email: info@firstskinfoundation.org
- **North American Menopause Society (NAMS)**
www.menopause.org – Reliable information on menopause and hormone therapy
- **American Academy of Dermatology (AAD)**
www.aad.org – Skin care tips for mature and dry skin

This Adult Toolkit Resource brought to you by:



This information is provided as a service to patients and parents of patients who have ichthyosis. It is not intended to supplement appropriate medical care, but instead to complement that care with guidance in practical issues facing patients and parents. Neither FIRST, its Board of Directors, Medical & Scientific Advisory Board, Board of Medical Editors, nor Foundation staff and officials endorse any treatments or products reported here. All issues pertaining to the care of patients with ichthyosis should be discussed with a dermatologist experienced in the treatment of their skin disorder.



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Improve lives and seek cures for those affected by ichthyosis and related skin types.

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