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Halting Habits and Helping Skin

Very often picking, scratching or rubbing skin troubled by eczema can make it worse. Therefore stopping these habits can help to make them better. However, this is very difficult because we often pick, scratch and rub without even realising it. You may only become aware of it whilst you're already doing it, and by then it's too late! With this in mind, here is a three part plan for stopping these habits and helping your skin...

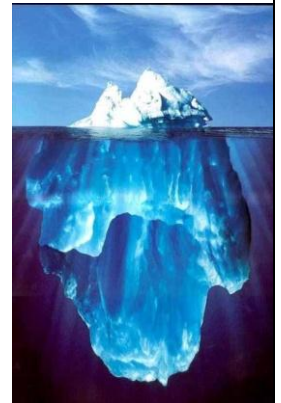


1. Motivation

It's only worth not scratching or rubbing if you believe that it will help you and your skin. Stopping these habits has been helpful for lots of people. You can look at your own skin and ask, *are the parts where I scratch worse or better than the parts where I don't?* If you're motivated to stop scratching the next two parts of the plan will show you how.

2. Awareness

The mind is like an iceberg: we are aware of what is above the surface, but there is a much more hidden below. Habits (e.g., scratching, rubbing, etc.) lie below the surface: if we don't realise we're doing it it's hard to stop. *So the second part of the plan is to become aware of the habit.* Some ideas for doing this are:



- Watch yourself doing habit in the mirror – are there any movements before the scratch you can become aware of?
- Ask someone to watch out for you doing the habit while watching TV
- Keep a tally of how many times you do it over 15 minutes
- Notice any particular situations when you might do it more (e.g. when studying, when nervous)



3. Choice

When you are aware then you have a choice: *do I keep doing the habit, or do I do something else?* There are countless possible options here. Some ideas include:

- Snapping an elastic band on your wrist
- Squeezing a stressball or making a fist
- Stroking an arm or another part of the body
- Taking three deep breaths
- Tensing your muscles to the count of three

If you pick a replacement behaviour this gives you the choice to do the habit or to do something else, which could be a path to helping your skin!

In summary, this sheet suggests a 3-part plan for stopping habits such as scratching or rubbing, in order to help you and your skin. The three parts of the plan are:

1. **Motivation:** *why would I not want to scratch?*
2. **Awareness:** *how can I become more aware of when I do scratch?*
3. **Choice:** *What can I do instead?*