

Neurodermatitis

At this time of year even the least sensitive skin can tend to get dry. The central heating is on, we are all wrapped up and the change from cold to warm to cold is a challenge for our **moisturising cream**.

That **itching** feeling that is normal for **dry patches** of skin may have no effect on some people and a chronic effect on others. The **incidence** of neurodermatitis, which is also known as atopic dermatitis or atopic eczema, and of psoriasis have increased in the last ten to fifteen years. Neurodermatitis is characterized by chronic itching or **scaling** of the skin. It starts with a patch of itchy skin, which leads to scratching. Scratching makes the affected area even itchier and the **sufferer** scratches a little more until he or she scratches **out of habit**. Chronic itching and scratching can

cause the affected area to become thick and leathery. It is therefore essential to break this itch-scratch cycle.

PTA: Hello. How may I help you?
My skin is extremely dry and itchy.

Oh, that's not unusual at this time of the year.

You see, my father had dermatitis when he was still working and I am afraid that I may get something similar if I don't do something to stop this itching and scratching, which is really getting on my nerves.

Do you mind me asking where these itchy patches are located?

No, not at all. I have them in the **crooks of my arms**, at the back of my knees, and my **wrists** are very dry, **coarse** and **cracked**.

As you're wearing gloves at the moment, I would like to see your hands so that I can get an idea how severe this dryness is.

(Customer removes her gloves) As you can see they are reddened and dry.

Oh yes, they certainly are! And I suppose it looks the same on your arms and legs.

Oh, it's even worse there. I often find myself **absentmindedly** scratching, especially behind the knees.

What we need to do is to try and reduce this feeling of itchiness. Do you shower daily or rather take baths?

I shower most days, but a few times a week I like to take a nice long hot bath.

Which is okay, but bathing may be aggravating your condition.

I see, so what do you recommend?

To start with we have this shower oil, which is much gentler than the usual supermarket products. And we have this oil and water emulsion which should be applied mornings and evenings. It might also be good to have a small tube of hand-cream in your handbag and to use it after hand-washing. This one contains 10% urea and is not perfumed, which, by the way, is very important when buying skincare products.

Good. Thank you for that information. Am I at risk of getting neurodermatitis?

There is an increased risk if someone in your family has had neurodermatitis. If you want to be sure, you should visit a dermatologist.

How much do I owe you?

That's 13,95 €

Here's the exact amount. Thank you.

Thank you too. Goodbye.

Goodbye. ■

*Catherine Croghan,
Lecturer in English and native speaker*

VOCABULARY

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Neurodermatitis | Neurodermitis, atopische Dermatitis, atopische Ekzem |
| moisturising cream | Feuchtigkeitscreme |
| itching | juckend, Juckreiz |
| dry patches | trockene Stellen |
| incidence | Auftretenshäufigkeit |
| scaling | Schuppung |
| scratching | Kratzen |
| sufferer | Betroffene, Leidende(r) |
| out of habit | aus Gewohnheit |
| crook of the arm | Armbeuge |
| wrist | handgelenk |
| coarse | rau |
| cracked | rissig |
| gloves | Handschuhe |
| severe | schwer, schlimm |
| absentmindedly | geistesabwesend |
| aggravating | verschlimmern |
| condition | Leiden, Beschwerden |
| gentler | sanfter |
| applied | aufgetragen |
| dermatologist | Hautarzt |