

Rash Study In Flint

Update: Flint Residents

August, 2016

For a long time, people in Flint have been worried about rashes and hair loss. These problems are real, and the question from people in Flint is: “Is the water causing skin problems?” A special team did a study from February through May of 2016 to find possible causes.

What the study found:

1



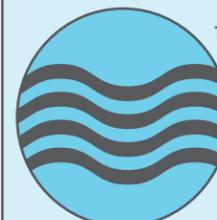
Many people saw skin doctors who volunteered as part of this study. Information from these visits helped the team look for possible causes.

3



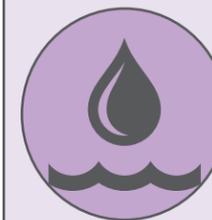
While some rashes may go away on their own without any treatment, others can be hard to get rid of without proper treatment. Stress makes almost all skin problems worse. People in Flint say there is a lot more stress since the Flint water crisis.

2



When the city was using water from the Flint River, there were large swings in chlorine, pH and hardness. These swings are one possible explanation for the eczema-related rashes.

4



In Flint's water now, the chlorine, water hardness, metals, and pH are not at levels that would cause skin problems.

For the study:

1. **429** people had rashes or hair loss when the study started and **390** agreed to be interviewed.
2. The team looked at information about the water Flint is using now. Also, they tested hot and cold water in people's homes for chlorine, water hardness, metals, and pH.
3. The team helped people see skin doctors for free. **122** people visited one of the skin doctors.
4. The team also looked at water test results from the water treatment plant when the city was using the Flint River water.



What Do I Do If I Still Have a Rash?



Take care of your skin.

See *The DOs and DON'Ts of Rashes* from Dr. Barkey, Flint dermatologist



Go see your doctor. If needed, they can refer you to a specialist.

Talk with your doctor about bathing and showering habits.



If you don't have a doctor, visit a health center. The health centers are open to everyone – both children and adults. For most people, they are free or very low cost.

Genesee Community Health Center (Genesee Health System):

(810) 496-5777

- 422 W. 4th Avenue
- 3109 Kleinpell Street

Hamilton Community Health Network:

(810) 406-4246

- 2900 N. Saginaw Street
- G-3375 S. Saginaw Street
- 5710 Clio Road

If you need assistance getting to your appointment, contact your health plan or United Way 2-1-1.

You may also be eligible for expanded health insurance coverage. To find out more, call the Michigan Health Care Helpline at **1-855-789-5610** or apply online at www.michigan.gov/mibridges.

Managing Stress:



If you are feeling stressed, talk to a trained crisis counselor from the Disaster Distress Helpline. All calls are free and confidential.



Call **1-800-985-5990**

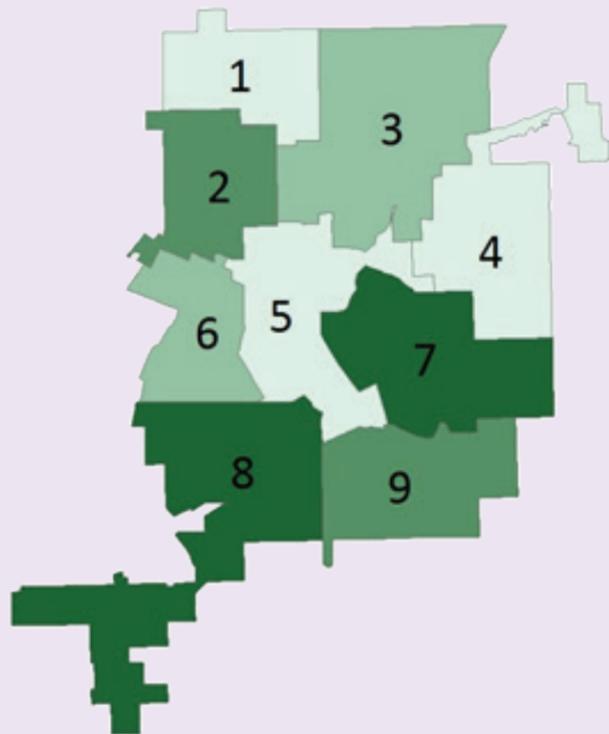


Text **'TalkWithUs'** to **66746**



Deaf or Hard of Hearing:
Call **1-800-846-8517**

Where Do People Who Participated in the Study Live?



Ward 1: 34 people

Ward 2: 40 people

Ward 3: 35 people

Ward 4: 34 people

Ward 5: 31 people

Ward 6: 38 people

Ward 7: 55 people

Ward 8: 44 people

Ward 9: 39 people

The DOs and DON'Ts of Rashes

Many things may cause rashes and scratching a rash may cause an infection. If you have a rash that does not go away and/or an uncomfortable rash, see your primary doctor or your dermatologist. Here are some things to consider in the meantime for an itchy rash:



Do try an over-the-counter antihistamine like Benadryl® (diphenhydramine) at night time if itching is keeping you from sleeping.



Do add an oatmeal bath product, such as Aveeno® Oilated Oatmeal, to a lukewarm bath and soak for a while.



Do use a gentle body wash like Dove® or Cetaphil® when you bathe or shower.



Do apply a good moisturizer to the rash. Creams, oils, and petrolatum based products are preferred over lotions.



Do clean open wound with a gentle cleanser and water.



Do apply over-the-counter 1% hydrocortisone cream or ointment to the rash twice a day (preferably after a bath or shower) for up to one week at a time.



Do keep your appointment with your primary doctor or your dermatologist even if you improve with these measures. He/She can diagnose your rash and may provide more powerful prescription remedies.



Don't use rubbing alcohol on your rash. It does not promote healing, does not kill infectious bacteria; it irritates, stings, dries out your skin and makes rashes like eczema worse.



Don't use regular bar soap on dry itchy rashes. Soap dries out skin and makes rashes like eczema worse.



Don't clean open wounds with hydrogen peroxide or bleach. They do not promote healing and aggravate most rashes.



Don't use triple-antibiotic ointment (such as Neosporin®). It does not kill the bacteria that cause skin infections, and may cause an allergic reaction in the skin due to one of the ingredients.

This document is based on recommendations by Walter Barkey, MD, a board certified dermatologist who practices in Flint, MI.