



St John's Institute of Dermatology

Scratch monitoring

This leaflet explains how to monitor your scratching behaviour (which is different to the sensation of an itch). This is the first of two leaflets that offer support on how to reduce habitual scratching. The second leaflet is called 'Habit reversal to reduce scratching and promote skin healing', please ask for a copy if you have not already.

If you have any further questions, please speak to the doctor, nurse or psychologist caring for you.

What is scratch monitoring?

Scratch monitoring is the recording of your usual scratching behaviour. This includes all situations and activities associated with scratching and how often scratching occurs.

Why should I monitor my scratching?

This is to help you to become more aware of habitual (regular) and unconscious scratching, and to identify when and where you scratch most often.

How to carry out scratch monitoring

Scratching on your skin might include using your nails, rubbing with hands, using clothes/the edge of objects, or someone else scratching you.

Scratch monitoring occurs for one week. Do not avoid scratching during this period.

To carry out your scratch monitoring, please follow these simple steps:

- Click on the hand-held tally counter every time you scratch, touch, rub or pick your skin.
- One scratching episode equals one click. If you use both hands to scratch, click twice.
- At the end of each day enter the day/ date and the total number of scratches for that day in the table on the next page, and then set the counter back to zero for the next day.
- Continue to follow your skin care plan.

For further advice, please speak to the doctor, nurse or psychologist caring for you in the dermatology department.

Scratch monitoring record

For one week, record the total number of scratches each day in the table below:

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Day/ Date | | | | | | | |
| Total number of scratches | | | | | | | |

During this week of scratch monitoring, keep a note of the situations in which you scratch the most (e.g. when watching TV, returning home, or after a shower). Use the box below to do this:

The situations I scratch in the most are:

Staying committed to scratch monitoring

Some people are worried, shocked, or amazed about finding out how much they scratch. This is natural. The suggestions below might help you stay committed to scratch monitoring:

- You can choose whether or not to disclose your scratch monitoring, but you might consider telling a friend or family member. You can ask them to remind you to “click” instead of them saying “stop scratching”. This may help motivate you to stick to your goal of scratch monitoring.
- If you prefer not to disclose in much detail, you might briefly explain, then change the topic of conversation.

What happens at the end of scratch monitoring?

After you have completed your scratch monitoring for one week, discuss your scratch monitoring record with your doctor, nurse or psychologist. You will then be ready to learn how to reduce your scratching using a technique called habit reversal - this is explained in the second leaflet ‘**Habit reversal to reduce scratching and promote skin healing**’. Please ask a member of staff for a copy.

Useful sources of information

Atopic Skin Disease

This website provides information about habit reversal and topical treatments.

w: www.atopicskindisease.com

The National Eczema Society

This organisation is an excellent source of information for people with eczema.

w: www.eczema.org

The British Association of Dermatologists

This organisation provides information on various skin conditions, self-help materials and support services.

w: www.skincare.org.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about scratch monitoring, please speak to the doctor, nurse or psychologist caring for you.

Out of hours, please contact your GP or NHS 111.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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