Sensitive Skin in Children

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According to the special interest group (SIG) on sensitive skin of the International Forum for Itch (IFSI), sensitive skin is consensually defined (1) as “a syndrome defined by the occurrence of unpleasant sensations (stinging, burning, pain, pruritus, and tingling sensations) in response to stimuli that normally should not provoke such sensations. These unpleasant sensations cannot be explained by lesions attributable to any skin disease. The skin can appear normal or be accompanied by erythema. Sensitive skin can affect all body locations, especially the face”.

Numerous studies have assessed the prevalence of sensitive skin among adults (2). These studies used similar methodologies that were based on surveys of samples of a population aged 15 years and older in accordance with quota sampling. The global prevalence of “sensitive skin” is estimated to be approximately 40%, with potential considerable upward trends in certain countries that may be attributed to genetic or environmental factors but more likely to socio-linguistic factors or cosmetic habits. Indeed, a comparison of 4 studies in the USA suggests that the frequency of sensitive skin might vary from 50 to 85% (3).

Although an increase in frequency with aging has been reported for sensitive scalp (4), there is evidence for a weak decrease in the frequency of sensitive skin with aging (5, 6). To the best of our knowledge, the presence of sensitive skin in children has not been evaluated. The aim of this study was to estimate the prevalence of sensitive skin in children under 6 years of age according to a survey among mothers.

METHODS (see Appendix S11)

RESULTS

In total, 608 mothers responded. The mean ±SD age was 33.6 ± 5.7 years (31.6 ± 5.7 for mothers with an only child vs 34.8 ± 5.4 for mothers with 2 or more children). Of the sample, 44.6% declared that they were concerned about the skin of their child: 49.6 if they had an only child vs 34.8 if they were girls (52.5 vs 43.0; p = 0.02), if their mother had sensitive skin (76.9% vs 48.9%; p < 0.0001), if they were girls (52.5 vs 43.0%; p = 0.02), if their mother was concerned with their skin (69.5 vs 21.9%; p < 0.0001), if dry skin was reported (636 vs 12.3%; p = 0.0001), if they had an associated skin disorder (60.2 vs 27.8%;

Table I. Triggering factors of skin blushing

| The mother finds that the skin of her child blushing:               | Very sensitive | Sensitive | Slightly sensitive | Not sensitive |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------|
| when exposed to cold                                             | 69.5%          | 62.3%     | 37.1%              | 9.9%          |
| when exposed to wind                                             | 47.5%          | 34.7%     | 16.9%              | 4.2%          |
| when washed with a soap                                          | 55.9%          | 25.7%     | 7.0%               | 4.2%          |
| when exposed to a cream                                          | 44.1%          | 18.1%     | 4.7%               | 1.4%          |
| when shampoo is used                                             | 23.7%          | 12.1%     | 4.2%               | 4.2%          |
| with bath water                                                  | 49.2%          | 28.3%     | 11.7%              | 4.2%          |
| with pool water                                                  | 49.2%          | 28.3%     | 11.7%              | 4.2%          |
| with sea water                                                   | 49.2%          | 28.3%     | 11.7%              | 4.2%          |
| following a minor effort                                          | 42.4%          | 29.1%     | 16.0%              | 9.9%          |
| after eating                                                     | 11.86%         | 5.28%     | 4.69%              | 1.41%         |
| when he/she pees or poops                                        | 55.93%         | 46.04%    | 25.35%             | 8.45%         |
| when exposed to heat                                             | 83.05%         | 78.11%    | 57.28%             | 36.62%        |

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frequency of sensitive skin in children with a mother who is concerned about the skin of her children suggests possible bias. Nonetheless, the strong correlation of positive answers for all questions on triggering factors of redness and unpleasant sensations clearly indicates that the majority of mothers know what sensitive skin is and might provide an adequate diagnosis.

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