Dear Chafing to Death,

It’s great that you keep up such an active lifestyle, but such frequent physical activity can leave you susceptible to issues such as chafing. This is a common problem for people who are physically active on a regular basis. It tends to happen around the groin area as you’ve described, but other susceptible areas to irritation are the inner thighs, underarms, and nipples. This is because it occurs from the friction produced when skin rubs against skin or clothing. Chafing is exacerbated by moisture and heat, meaning that working out makes chafing a likely occurrence due to an increase in body temperature, sweat production, and frequent movement. People with more body mass, whether from muscle or fat, may find themselves even more susceptible to this issue. The good news is that there are a number of ways to prevent this chafing!

Some ways to prevent or reduce chafing, which may include:

- **Hydration:** Being well hydrated before, during, and after workouts allows the body to sweat freely so that salts from perspiration don't evaporate into crusty crystals that can irritate skin.
• **Lube:** Lubricating ointments, anti-chafing specific creams or balms, and simple petroleum jelly are all possible ways to allow for a more frictionless glide on skin.

• **Activity-friendly gear:** Shorts and other workout gear that are neither too tight nor too loose provide more reliable protection against chafing (skipping underwear and letting it all hang free may be in the too loose category). Cotton isn’t the best choice because it gets soaked with sweat and stays damp. Instead, synthetic fabrics that wick sweat off the skin may provide a more comfortable feel.

• **Drying agents:** For the same reason that clothes that wick sweat off the body are recommended, drying agents may help as well. You’ve mentioned using baby powder, but you can also try applying other talcum or alum powders in the areas most prone to chafing.

Sometimes, even the greatest of prevention efforts just isn't successful. Chafing is no exception, but there are some simple treatments that are widely available. To provide some relief, you can try cleaning the affected area with soap and water, drying the area thoroughly, applying a drying powder, and then applying a topical steroid ointment (such as 1 percent or 2.5 percent hydrocortisone ointment) to alleviate inflammation. If the chafing is persistent or an impediment to your daily life, you may consider a consultation with a health care provider.

While chafing is one reason for irritation in the groin area, jock itch may also be the cause. This is a fungal infection that causes a red and itchy rash in warm and moist areas of the body, such as the groin and inner thighs. It may be in a ring-shape with a line of small blisters. The prevention measures are similar to those for chafing, but there are some additional recommendations. For example, there's additional concern about not sharing personal items because the fungus can spread from person-to-person or by sharing contaminated towels or clothing. Additionally, you may want to also consider wearing sandals in public showers to prevent athlete’s foot. This condition can spread to the groin and also cause jock itch. If you do find yourself dealing with jock itch, you may want to clean and then thoroughly dry the affected area. Wearing loose clothing and applying an over-the-counter antifungal treatment or drying powder may help control the infection. Similar to chafing, a consultation with a health care provider may be useful if jock itch is persistent (about more than two weeks) or an impediment to your daily life. They can also help determine if you’re unsure of if what you’re experiencing is chafing or jock itch.

Maintaining an active lifestyle can provide some great health benefits. As with most aspects of life, there are pros and cons. Adding some prevention efforts into your physical activity routine may aid in minimizing those cons.

Wishing you relief,

Alice!

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