



# Atopic Dermatitis (Eczema)

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## Atopic Dermatitis (ECZEMA)

Atopic dermatitis, also called eczema, is a common skin problem. There is no cure for eczema. Good skin care and medicines can help control the problem. As children get older, eczema may get better, but even some adults have problem with their skin in certain situations.

The following eczema suggestions also apply to anyone who has areas of dry skin secondary to irritants or dry air.

## Daily Skin Care

1. Moisturize the skin. Eczema causes dry skin, itching, and scratching. This can be worse during the winter when the heat is on. The colder it is outside, the drier the air inside will be. To keep the skin in good condition, put on a moisturizer once or twice a day. The best time to apply the moisturizer is right after a bath or shower. If you are also using a steroid medicine, put it on before the moisturizer.
2. Ointments, un-fragranced creams or lotions should be applied at least once a day to the entire body. Ointments may work better than lotions. Suggestions for moisturizers include: Eucerin™, Aquaphor™, and even Vaseline™ for very dry difficult areas.
3. Use a mild unscented soap or non-soap cleanser. Dove™, Tone™, Olay™ are good moisturizing soaps. If the condition is moderately severe, then avoid even those and use one of the non-soap cleansers such as Cetaphil™ lotion or Aveeno™ bath oil are good substitutes for soap.
4. Don't take too many baths. Bathing or showering too much (more than once a day) can dry the skin. Children may bathe once a day if needed. Remember to put on a moisturizer right after the bath. Lukewarm water is most gentle for the skin. In summer, eczema can be aggravated by heat and sweating. In this situation, more frequent bathing can be helpful.
5. Wear cotton clothing next to the skin. Wool or synthetic fabrics may cause itching. As much as possible, have children wear cotton clothing next to the skin.

## Other Things That May Help

1. Use a vaporizer or room humidifier. When the heat is on, try using a vaporizer or humidifier in your child's bedroom at night. Remember to clean the vaporizer regularly.

2. Consider using a mild laundry detergent. Some laundry detergents contain chemicals or additives that can irritate the skin. Try using an additive-free product.
3. Consider changing or eliminating your fabric softener. Some children with eczema are sensitive to the chemicals used in dryer sheet fabric softeners. Try using no fabric softener or one you put in with the wash.

## **Treating a Flare-Up**

At times, eczema will flare-up, often for no known reason. Your child will have more itching and red, rough patches of skin. Some of these patches will be quite circular and may look a bit like ringworm. Ringworm, however, has a very raised edge.

During flare-ups, your child may obtain some relief of itching by soaking in a lukewarm Aveeno™ oatmeal bath. Other medicines such as Benadryl™ may be used.

### *Steroid Creams and Ointments*

Steroid medicines are put on the skin as a thin coat to help. They may be used alone or with other medicines. Once the skin looks normal, stop the steroid. Strong steroid creams can have some side effects if used too long especially on the face. Over the counter hydrocortisone cream is a mild steroid which can provide some benefit during flare-ups. If it doesn't seem to help, your child may need a stronger prescription cream for awhile. Please call the office if your child's rash is not improving.

### *Non-steroid cream*

A medicine that is not a steroid may be used alone or with a steroid. This medication is Elidel™ a topical anti-inflammatory cream.

### *Antihistamine*

To help itching, we may use an antihistamine. If over the counter Benadryl™ is not helping, sometimes a stronger prescription antihistamine may provide some relief of itching.

### *Antibiotic*

Sometimes children with eczema can get a skin infection. If your child's rash looks especially crusty or weeping, she should be examined in the office to see if there is an infection that may need an oral antibiotic. Please call the office if you are concerned about your child's rash.