

ALLECZEMA

about



WHAT IS ECZEMA?

Eczema (pronounced “EK-zema”), also known as atopic dermatitis, is a chronic skin condition in which the epidermis (a layer of the skin) is inflamed. With eczema, inflammatory cells in the body’s immune system “overreact” to certain triggers. The rash may appear to get better if controlled properly, but it can reappear when “triggered.”

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ECZEMA?

Eczema is characterized by an itchy rash, although the appearance of the rash may vary from person to person. The rash can appear on the face, scalp, arms, knees and feet but may also present elsewhere. The rash may appear oozy, crusty, dry, or scaly. There is often a change in pigmentation of the skin to be reddish, brown, or yellowed. The sites where eczema is present may also appear to be infected.

WHAT CAUSES ECZEMA?

The exact cause of eczema is not known, but it most often develops in infancy and has been known to run in families. Certain factors may “trigger” flare-ups of eczema such as stress, illness, temperature changes (extreme cold in the winter, hot in the summer), dry skin, and exposure to irritants, such as soap and detergents. It is common for children with environmental and food allergies to also develop eczema. The exposure to these allergies, such as pet dander, pollens, or certain foods, may “trigger” a flare-up of eczema.

HOW DO I KNOW IF ITS ECZEMA AND NOT JUST ANOTHER RASH?

Whereas most other rashes disappear within a few days or weeks, eczema tends to persist. It may go away for a short period of time, but it continues to come back. Eczema may be diagnosed by your pediatrician, but your pediatrician may also refer your child to an allergist. In many cases, an allergist may perform skin and blood testing to determine certain factors that may be triggering the eczema.

HOW COMMON IS ECZEMA?

Eczema is very common and is estimated to affect over 30 million Americans. Some children may outgrow eczema by several years of age, but most tend to have it throughout life. Eczema is not contagious and cannot be passed from person to person.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR ECZEMA?

There is not a “cure” for eczema, but the main goal is to control it. Eczema is a condition that waxes and wanes, meaning it may fluctuate between appearing better and then looking worse. Ways to control it include:

- **Protect the skin barrier by moisturizing!** Use moisturizers on the skin immediately after baths to help the skin maintain moisture. Be sure to reapply moisturizer several times throughout the day. Also, if your doctor has prescribed a topical steroid, be certain to apply the steroid first, and then the moisturizer.
- **Prevent infection.** Recognize signs of skin infection and notify your doctor so it can be treated early.
- **Reduce exposure to allergens and irritants.** Avoid harsh detergents and soaps, and wear clothing that is soft and not abrasive. Cotton fabrics are best, and try to avoid wool if possible. If your child is known to be allergic to certain things like pollens, pets or foods, these should be avoided!

Your doctor may prescribe topical steroids, antibiotics, antihistamines, and recommend moisturizers to use for your child. When you visit your allergist, an individualized eczema care plan will be designed specifically to treat your child’s eczema.

Special Allergy Program

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MY ECZEMA CARE PLAN

Step 1: Moisturize! Good daily skin care is the key factor in controlling eczema. Here's what to do:

Baths

- Use soaking baths _____ times a day to hydrate your child's skin.
 1. Use warm water only, not soap. Soak in bath for 15-20 minutes. If soap is needed, use only at the end of the bath and rinse immediately.
 2. After bath, pat skin dry (do not to rub dry as this is irritating to the skin)
 3. Immediately after patting dry, apply the topical steroid, if prescribed, and then moisturizer.

Moisturizers

- Immediately after bath, apply the moisturizer _____.
*If using a topical steroid, apply this BEFORE the moisturizer!
- Re-apply the moisturizer _____ times a day to all areas.

Step 2: Controlling the "itch" and treating infections. Itching can lead to scratching, and scratching leads to infection and inflammation of the skin. Here's how to control it:

Antihistamines

- Morning: Take _____ of _____, each morning as needed for itching.
- Bedtime: Take _____ of _____, each bedtime as needed for itching.
- Breakthrough itching: Take _____ of _____, no less than 6 hours after a previous dose of antihistamine.

Corticosteroids

For the face:

- Apply _____ to affected areas _____ times a day.

For the body:

- Apply _____ to affected areas _____ times a day.

Antibiotics

- By mouth: Take _____ of _____, _____ times a day for _____ days.
- Ointment: Apply _____ to affects areas _____ times a day for _____ days.

Step 3: Reducing Triggers and Prevention. Triggers are what will continue to bring on your child's eczema. The best thing to do is to avoid them! Here's what to avoid and how:

Triggers/Irritants:

Home: Avoid strong smelling scents such as candles, air fresheners and incense. Air temperature is important for your child's skin as well. In the winter, try to keep the temperature no warmer than 68-72° F to prevent drying of the skin. Avoid long-term cold exposure as this can flare eczema too.

Skin: When using soaps, use mild soaps such as Cetaphil, Aveeno, Dove or Neutrogena.

Laundry: Use mild detergents for clothing, such as Dreft and no fabric softeners. Wear soft cottons instead of wools and synthetic fibers.

Outdoors: Keep covered as much as you can to reduce skin contact with allergens such as grass, and rinse off and change clothes after exposure.

Prevention:

- Bleach baths.** Soak as described below _____ times a week.
Bleach baths help to reduce the skin's bacteria that could eventually lead to infection when eczema is active. Bleach baths are used only as a preventive measure when the skin is looking better, and the skin is not actively irritated.

Directions: Put ¼ to ½ cup bleach into a tub full of lukewarm water. Soak in the tub for 10 minutes. Rinse the skin with fresh lukewarm water at the end of the bleach bath. Pat dry the skin and apply any prescribed medication and/or moisturizers. Repeat per your doctor's recommendation.

- Topical Corticosteroids:** Apply _____ to areas that have been previously affected and troublesome.

The following allergens have been identified for your child. Try to avoid them!

