

what you

NEED TO KNOW

about...

Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis)

What is eczema?

The skin of children and teens with eczema:

- Does not block out allergens (like dust mite droppings) as well as it should
- Does not fight germs on the skin (bacteria like staph aureus) as well as it should
- Is hypersensitive (too sensitive) to these germs and allergens
- Does not fight certain skin viruses very well (like Herpes Simplex-the 'cold sore' virus)

This can cause:

- Dry skin
- Germs on the skin to grow
- Flares of itching and rash
- Severe skin infections
- Scratch-itch-scratch cycles. Part of the scratching is a habit.

How is eczema treated?

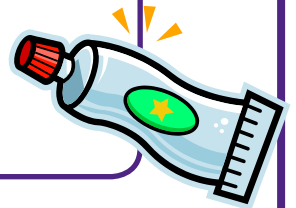
Eczema can be treated with prescription skin ointments, oral medications or both.

Skin Creams and ointments

These usually contain small amounts of cortisone, which calms the skin's reaction to allergens. Your doctor may prescribe stronger creams for short periods of time if needed.

Remember to:

- Use a tongue depressor to take ointment or cream out of the jar (this keeps germs out)
- Apply a thin layer and rub into to the problem areas twice a day



Antihistamines

Your doctor may prescribe these oral medications (taken by mouth). They can help your child or teen rest when scratching leads to poor sleep.



Antibiotics

Antibiotics may be needed sometimes to treat skin infections.

Keeping eczema under control

There are many ways to help your child or teen keep eczema under control.

Bathing



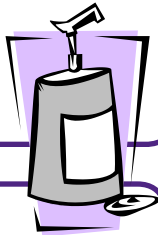
It will help for children and youth to:

- Take lukewarm baths or showers, 3-7 times each week
- Use a mild skin cleanser (like Dove® unscented soap)
- Pat skin dry with a towel, leaving skin a little damp

Moisturizing

Apply a moisturizing cream to damp skin after a bath or shower. This 'traps' water in the skin, and helps skin keep germs and allergens out. Avoid creams or lotions with perfume, urea and alpha hydroxyl acids. Some helpful products:

- Aveeno®
- Vaseline Creamy®
- Glaxal Base®
- Cetaphil cream®
- Cliniderm®
- Petroleum jelly



Dust mites

Dust mite droppings are allergens that can make eczema worse. To control dust mites and their droppings:

- Vacuum the bedroom carpet everyday (or replace with a smooth floor if possible)
- Use special mattress and pillow covers (Vital Aire®) under cotton liners or mattress covers
- Change furnace filters every 3-4 months
- Wash sheets and mattress covers once a week



Swimming

Make sure your child has a shower or bath right after swimming. Pat skin dry with a towel and apply a moisturizer when skin is still damp.

Clothing

Some clothing can irritate the skin. To prevent this, make sure your child or teen:

- Wears cotton clothing as much as possible
- Avoids wool, or rough fabric
- Wears loose, light clothing in summer
- Has 2 pairs of winter boots (one pair is kept dry)
- Wears leather shoes
- Wears rubber gloves (over cotton gloves, if possible) for wet work



Food

In rare cases, some foods can cause a flare up of eczema. Some foods that may cause problems:

- Milk products
- Nuts
- Eggs
- Shellfish
- Chocolate
- Fruits

If you think your child is reacting to food, don't give it for 2 weeks and then re-introduce it to see if the eczema flares.



Sunscreen

Some children with eczema are sensitive to regular sunscreens. If this happens, try:

- Neutrogena® SPF 30 for sensitive skin
- Aveeno® SPF 25-50

Habit reversal

This can be helpful with older children. First, we help children become more aware of their scratching. Children then learn less damaging ways to handle itching (like moisturizing or pinching).

Children and youth with more severe eczema

Your doctor will tell you if you should try these treatments:

Infection control baths

Give your child a bath with $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup bleach added to a half bathtub of water twice each week. Let your child sit in the bath for 5-10 minutes.

Overnight wet wrap

These wraps are applied after moisturizers and medicated creams and stay on overnight. Check www.eczemacenter.org.

Questions?

For appointments and scheduling
Clinic clerk: 613-737-7600 extension 2395

For questions about eczema
Clinic nurse: 613-737-7600
extension 3347

