

- Stress can make eczema worse as it can make sufferers feel itchier. Also contact with cats, dogs or horses

Treatments

Moisturisers – these are the main basis for treatment of eczema and should be used on a daily, even when symptoms have resolved. Moisturisers or emollients can be used in the bath instead of soap based products.

Avoid perfumed products.

Topical Corticosteroids – these are sometimes required for flare up areas of eczema. It is important to continue moisturising regularly whilst using these creams. The steroid creams can be stopped once the eczema has settled down. For children over the age of two years, sometimes topical treatment with another group of drugs called calcineurin inhibitors (Tacrolimus, Pimecrolimus) can be helpful.

Antibiotics – if there are signs of an infection then antibiotic creams or oral antibiotics may be required for a short duration.

Antihistamines – if a child's sleep is being disturbed during a flare up, an anti-itch medicine at night may be suggested which may help your child sleep more comfortably.

Bandages – dry or medicated bandages can be soothing and may be required to help stop the itching and help treat a severe flare up. Your doctor will advise if these are needed.

Useful Contact

National Eczema Society, Hill House, Highgate Hill, London, N19 4NA.
Telephone Helpline: 0870 241 3604, E-mail helpline:
helpline@eczema.org, Website: www.eczema.org

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Information for families

Eczema in Children



What is Eczema?

Eczema is a condition that causes the skin to be generally dry. It may also become itchy, red, and cracked. It is a long-term - or chronic - condition. Atopic eczema ('atopic' means sensitivity to allergens), is the most common form of eczema. It mainly affects children, but can continue into adulthood. The child or other family members may also have asthma or hayfever.

What causes eczema?

The exact cause of eczema is unknown. However, it often occurs in people who get allergies.

How common is eczema?

About one in five children in the UK has eczema, with the majority of cases occurring before a child reaches five years of age. Many children develop it before their first birthday. Eczema clears up or significantly improves in many children as they get older.

Certain areas are more likely affected:

- Babies: the cheeks and face
- Toddlers: the backs of knees and ankles and the inside of wrists.
- Older children and adults: the folds of the elbows and knees
- In some people the rash is all over the body.

What is the outlook?

Eczema can vary in severity. Most people are only mildly affected and have small areas of dry or red skin, which are occasionally itchy. Other people have more severe symptoms, such as cracked, sore and bleeding skin. A person with eczema usually has periods when symptoms are less noticeable, and flare-ups when symptoms become more severe and require additional treatment.

What are the trigger factors?

There are certain things which can irritate the skin. It is recommended that you try to avoid these.

- Irritants - for example soaps and detergents
- Exposure to house dust mites – regular vacuuming of bedroom and damp dusting as well as covers for pillows and mattresses may help reduce exposure
- Infection – may cause the eczema to become more inflamed and weepy and may require treatment with antibiotics. It is recommended that people with eczema avoid direct contact with cold sores
- Clothing – some clothes such as wool or nylon may make eczema worse
- Animal fur – in some people may make eczema worse.
- Food allergies – in a small number of people their eczema may be affected by some foods. A diary of foods and when exacerbations occur may help identify if food is a problem. It is important to discuss with your doctor before going on an exclusion diet.