



Eczema: Scratching the Surface

What is Eczema?

Eczema is a chronic inflammatory skin condition, characterized by dry skin, with patches that are red and intensely itchy. These patches may ooze, become scaly, crusted, or hardened. Symptoms can range from mild to severe, and the condition can negatively impact quality of life. Eczema can occur anywhere on the skin and is commonly found on the flexors (bends of the arms, backs of the knees).



About Eczema

Atopic dermatitis is the most common type of eczema, usually starting in infancy. Many young children will outgrow their eczema; however, some will have a lifelong condition. Atopy refers to a hereditary tendency toward eczema, asthma, and allergies. People with eczema may suffer with one of the other atopic diseases.

Flare-Ups & Itch

Flare-ups can be prompted by environmental elements or "triggers" such as certain soaps, clothing fabrics, deodorants, carpet fibres, dust, and others. Sometimes a flare-up will occur, however, with no discernable trigger. Overheating, excessive sweating, low humidity, certain foods and stress can also contribute to flare-ups. Avoiding triggers is an important part of eczema management.

When the skin becomes irritated by any one of these irritants, it itches, causing the sufferer to scratch the affected area. Scratching makes the condition worse and the skin becomes inflamed and reddened, aggravating the itch. This is called the "itch-scratch cycle" and itching can become severe and painful.



Tips & Facts

- Keeping your skin moist and well hydrated (e.g. apply moisturizer several times throughout the day)
- Use a cool-mist humidifier in the house or in the bedroom of the eczema sufferer, especially during the dry winter months. Clean as directed to prevent potential mold growth.
- Avoid overheating and sweating, when possible, as it increases itchiness and can worsen eczema.
- Cotton clothing is often best tolerated by people with eczema.
- Avoid harsh soaps, and try to select products that are formulated for eczema and/or sensitive skin.
- Often kids will outgrow eczema.
- Keep nails trimmed short and filed smooth – this can be extremely helpful in reducing the severity of flare-up and skin damage.
- Eczema is not contagious. You cannot "catch" it from a school playmate.
- Ensure that you use your prescription products as recommended by your doctor.
- Eczema sufferers often use too little, rather than too much, of their topical treatments, which reduces the effectiveness of the medication.

How can your doctor help?

See your doctor if you have any questions about your or your child's eczema. If the eczema is not improving after following these recommendations and your doctor's treatments, a dermatologist will be able to help.

The Eczema Society of Canada is here to help!

Contact a support volunteer at www.eczemahelp.ca • 1-855-eczema-1



The Importance of Bathing and Moisturizing

Bathing allows moisture to enter the skin. Coating the skin after every bath or shower with a moisturizer helps to seal that moisture in the skin. This is necessary in patients with eczema as their natural skin barrier, which would normally trap moisture in the skin, doesn't work well. This leaves the skin dry, rough and sensitive to irritants.

After bathing, gently pat the skin dry and then immediately apply your moisturizer to skin that is still damp. Apply prescription products, as recommended by your physician. Apply a moisturizer several times throughout the day. Moist skin will reduce itchiness, which in turn helps to control the disease, as flares occur or increase in response to itching.

TIP: After your shower, gently pat the skin dry (avoid rubbing the skin)

Frequent bathing (even 2 to 3 times daily) followed by a rich moisturizer should be your first defence when experiencing an eczema flare!

Showering

Many adults prefer showering over taking a bath for reasons of preference and convenience. Use warm water (never hot) and use a gentle cleanser and/or shower oil. After your shower, gently pat the skin dry (avoid rubbing the skin). While leaving the skin still slightly damp, immediately apply your moisturizer (and/or prescription products as indicated by your doctor).

Prescription Products

Speak to your doctor about the use of prescription products to:

- reduce inflammation (e.g. topical corticosteroids, Protopic®, Elidel®)
- repair the skin barrier (e.g. EpiCeram®)
- eliminate bacterial infections and help clear the eczema (e.g. Fucidin® H, fusidic acid, oral antibiotics)

Fearing side effects, patients and parents of patients often use too little, rather than too much of their prescription products. Prescription treatments for eczema are very safe when used under the direction of a physician.



Recommended Cleansers and Moisturizers

These products have been reviewed and have earned our Seal of Acceptance:



Accepted · Accepté
www.eczemahelp.ca

Moisturizers

- A-Derma® EXOMEGA Emollient Balm
- Aveeno® Eczema Care Moisturizing Cream
- Aveeno® Baby Eczema Care Moisturizing Cream
- Cetaphil® RESTORADERM® Replenishing Moisturizer
- GlaxalBase Moisturizing Cream
- La Roche Posay® Lipikar Baume AP
- POLYSPORIN® ECZEMA ESSENTIALS™ Daily Moisturizing Cream
- Spectro® E-Care Intense Rehydrating Cream
- Spectro® Kids E-Care Intense Moisturizing Cream

Cleansers

- Aveeno® Eczema Care Body Wash
- Aveeno® Baby Eczema Care Body Wash
- Cetaphil® RESTORADERM® Nourishing Body Wash
- POLYSPORIN® ECZEMA ESSENTIALS™ Daily Body Wash
- Spectro® Kids E-Care Moisturizing Body Wash

For more information, visit:
www.eczemahelp.ca