
What is eczema?

- Eczema is a skin problem where water loss from the skin causes a weak skin barrier. It is also called atopic dermatitis.
 - A weak skin barrier leads to skin redness, inflammation and itching.
 - This happens on different areas of skin at different times.
- Sometimes your child's skin may be under control. At other times, your child's skin may be itchy and red. This is called an eczema flare.
- Children who have eczema may also have allergies or asthma, but allergies do not cause eczema.

What are triggers for my child's eczema?

Some things in the environment can irritate your child's eczema, causing an eczema flare. These are called triggers. Some triggers include:

- Bacteria (germs)
- Stress
- Fabrics, such as certain clothes, towels and sheets
- Soaps and detergents
- Lotions that smell
- Weather changes (hot or cold)
- Being in the sun and sweating
- Animal dander, pollens and molds

Do food allergies cause eczema?

Foods or food allergies do not cause eczema. They may be triggers in a small number of children. Still, research does not show that it helps to remove foods from their diet. Removing foods does not make symptoms less severe or prevent eczema flares in most children.

Most often, doctors do not advise parents to remove foods from a child's diet to help manage their eczema. Removing foods, especially common food allergens, can:

- Result in poor nutrition.
- Affect a child's development.
- Increase the risk of Type 1 Hypersensitivity (IgE-mediated) reactions. This causes symptoms like hives, swelling and vomiting (throwing up).

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Eczema, continued

What is the treatment?

The goal is to make the top layer of skin stronger with creams, ointments, medicines or special care. This helps to stop itching, redness, inflammation or irritation. Some treatment guidelines are listed below. Talk with the doctor about what is best for your child.

Soak and seal

- **Soak** the skin in water for at least 10 to 15 minutes every day. Your child can do this by taking a bath or shower.
- Use gentle, fragrance-free (no smell) soaps and shampoos. Rinse them all the way off the skin with water.
- Pat the skin dry. Keep the skin a little damp and moist.
- **Seal** in the moisture. Do this by putting a thick cream or greasy ointment on your child's skin. You can use any of these:
 - CeraVe
 - Vaseline
 - Aquaphor
 - Eucerin

Skin medicine

- Your child's doctor may prescribe a type of steroid medicine that goes on the skin. This is called a topical corticosteroid.
- Use the medicine as advised by the doctor. Most often, a thin layer of medicine is put on the rash up to 2 times each day. This could be 1 time in the morning and 1 time at night.
- Only put the medicine on the rash, not on normal looking skin. This helps to prevent problems called side effects.
- Put the medicine on the rash. Then put on a cream or greasy ointment on normal skin.
- Talk with the doctor about what medicine to put on sensitive areas such as your child's face, underarms or anywhere near private parts.

Antihistamines

- Your child may have trouble sleeping when they feel itchy.
- The doctor may prescribe antihistamines, such as cetirizine (Zyrtec), diphenhydramine (Benadryl), or hydroxyzine (Atarax), if this happens.

Wet wraps

- Your child's eczema may get worse at times.
- Your child's doctor's may advise for wet wraps when this happens. This can help with pain and itching.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Eczema, continued

- To do this:
 - Have your child take a bath or shower. Pat the skin dry.
 - If prescribed, apply the steroid medicine on your child's rashes.
 - Apply a thick moisturizer (like Vaseline, Aquaphor or Eucerin).
 - Put cotton pajamas under warm water. Squeeze out the water until they are only a little damp.
 - Help your child put on the damp pajamas.
 - Put dry pajamas on top of the damp pajamas.
 - Adjust the room temperature or use blankets to keep your child comfortable.
 - Have your child keep these on for 3 to 4 hours or while they sleep at night.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if:

- Your child's eczema is not getting better after 2 weeks of treatment.
- Your child has a skin infection, which can look like yellow crusts of the skin or red painful bumps that contain yellow or white pus.
- Your child is having thinning or lightening of the skin.
- Your child is sad or depressed.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.