



Eczema in Children

What is eczema?

Eczema (atopic dermatitis) is a problem where the **skin becomes dry, red and itchy**. It is very common in children.

Can it be cured?

Eczema symptoms will **come and go**. There are times when the symptoms are worse, called exacerbations or **flares**.

How do I prevent flares?

- **Moisturize:** Use fragrance-free and dye-free moisturizers on your child's skin every day. You may need to moisturize multiple times per day.

Examples of daily moisturizers:

- Vaseline®
 - Neutrogena®
 - Vani Cream®
 - Mustela®
 - Eucerin®
 - CeraVe®
 - Aquaphor®
 - Aveeno®
- **Bathing:** Keep baths and showers under 20 minutes using warm water. Use cleansers with no perfume or dye. Moisturize within 2 minutes after exiting the shower or bath.

Examples of mild cleansers:

- Dove®
 - Cetaphil®
 - Neutrogena®
 - Oil of Olay®
- **Don't scratch:** Keep fingernails cut short and filed smooth. Try to distract your child and remind your child to keep from scratching and/or keep skin covered.

What medications should I use during a flare?

Ask your doctor about using steroids and antihistamines.

- **Topical steroids**, like hydrocortisone, are creams or ointments that have medication in them to treat the skin inflammation directly. Your doctor may prescribe them in a “**burst and taper**” with instructions such as “use twice daily for two weeks and then no more than two days per week.” This is to prevent side effects. Steroids come in many strengths. You should use the weakest one that helps.
- **Oral antihistamines**, like Zyrtec or Claritin, are medications taken by mouth to reduce itching. Ask your doctor about the right dose.

When should I call my doctor?

You should see your doctor if the eczema looks infected (blisters, weeping fluid, raised areas, redness that spreads, fevers). Areas where the skin was scratched can be infection sites. You should also call your doctor if the medications your doctor prescribes are not helping or if there is no response to steroid burst after one week.

Additional resources:

National Eczema Association <http://www.nationaleczema.org>

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology <http://www.aaaai.org>

American Academy of Dermatology <http://www.aad.org>

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