



## Eczema

Eczema, also known as atopic dermatitis, is a chronic, recurring inflammatory disorder of the skin. It is characterized by patchy, dry, itchy and/or scaly areas. Eczema is most common in people with a family history of asthma, allergic rhinitis or atopic dermatitis. It is also the most common skin condition in children under the age of 12 and occurs in approximately ten percent of all children. More than half of all cases begin during the first year of life, with 90% of cases developed by the age of 5.

In infants and toddlers, the areas of skin involved are typically the face, elbows and/or knees. In older children and adults, areas of involvement are usually the hands, neck, inner elbows, behind the knees and/or the ankles. Eczema is not contagious. Although it typically becomes less severe as one ages, it is a lifelong condition which comes and goes, particularly in cold weather.

### Treatment Goals:

- Maintain appropriate hydration of the skin
- Control itching. Eczema is the “itch that rashes”.
- Control inflammation
- Improve quality of life by healing the skin and preventing or minimizing flare-ups

### Preventive Measures:

People with atopic dermatitis should use a combination of preventive measures and an individualized therapeutic regimen. Maintain short fingernails by cutting them frequently. This minimizes the effects of scratching at an eczema flare up. Avoid any triggers that may cause flare ups such as:

- Dry skin
- Extremes of temperature
- Irritants (soaps, some lotions, solvents, rough fabrics)
- Allergens (dust mites, food)
- Emotional stress
- Perspiration -- Wear clothing that “breathes” and absorbs perspiration like cotton instead of occlusive fabrics.

### Hydration and Emollients:

Moisturize, Moisturize, Moisturize!

Topical Immuno-modulators:

- Medications, like Protopic or Elidel, which are available by prescription only.
- Apply sparingly to affected areas no more than twice a day and only if needed.
- May be used anywhere on the body.

Topical Steroids:

- Apply sparingly to affected areas no more than twice a day and only if needed.
- In general, unless otherwise instructed by your Allergist, 1% hydrocortisone cream/ointment is the strongest topical steroid recommended for use on the face and should not be used around the eyes.

Sedating Antihistamines:

- If nighttime itching is a problem, then a sedating antihistamine like Benadryl (diphenhydramine), Zyrtec (cetirizine) or Atarax (hydroxyzine) may be appropriate.

Antibiotics and Antifungals:

- Check with your Allergist for more information about how and when to use these medications.

If you have a flare up of eczema and all of the measures recommended above (avoiding triggers, hydration and topical medications) are no longer working, then please contact your Allergist. A flare up is often due to a bacterial or fungal infection in the skin, and topical and/or oral antibiotics or antifungal creams may be needed.

If you have questions about eczema, feel free to contact our office at 614-760-0099. One of our staff would be happy to answer your questions about eczema and different treatment options offered at Allergy & Asthma Clinics of Ohio.