

What is eczema?

Eczema, also known as atopic dermatitis, is a condition that causes dry, itchy, red, scaly skin. It can occur at any age and tends to run in families. Its exact cause is not completely understood but most people with eczema have dysfunction in the outer layer of their skin (epidermis). Infants typically have involvement of their cheeks and the front of their arms and legs. In children, eczema can affect multiple areas but tends to affect the elbow creases and backs of the knees.

How is it managed?

A consistent skin care regimen is important to prevent red, itchy flares.

1. Bathing & Moisturizers

- **Shower or bathe for up to 5-10 minutes** in lukewarm water **every day**.
- **Do NOT use soaps, shampoos, or bubble baths.** If necessary, use a gentle cleanser for dirty areas at the very end of the shower/bath.
- Pat dry after shower/bath (skin should still be damp) and **IMMEDIATELY apply moisturizing cream** (unscented).
 - Consider using Glaxal base, Aveeno eczema, Cerave, Eucerin, Cetaphil, or Vaseline/Aquaphor ointment.
- Consider applying moisturizing cream more than once per day.
- Your doctor may recommend a low concentration bleach bath 1-2 times per week to help reduce skin bacteria that can worsen eczema.
 - Add 120 ml (1/2 cup) of regular strength household bleach (6% sodium hypochlorite) to a full standard-size bathtub of warm water (usually ~ 150 liters).
 - For smaller bathtubs, use 1 tsp (5 ml) of regular bleach for every 5 liters of water.

2. Eliminate Triggers

- Wear 100% cotton clothes. Avoid wool and other rough fabrics.
- Wash clothes with mild, unscented detergent. Avoid fabric softener and dryer sheets.
- Avoid excessive heat and sweating.
- Avoid cold, dry air. Consider a humidifier in the winter.
- Keep bare skin off the grass if that tends to worsen the eczema.

3. Prescription Medication

- For red, itchy flares apply hydrocortisone 0.5% or 1% ointment to the affected areas 1-2 times per day for 5-7 days (redness should completely disappear).
 - This is a safe, low potency, over-the-counter steroid.
- Your doctor may prescribe a more potent medication for more severe eczema