

ECZEMA INFORMATION

Eczema, or Atopic Dermatitis, is a common, chronic inflammatory skin condition characterized by dry, itchy patches of skin with a chronic relapsing course. Eczema has multiple causative factors, such as, genetic susceptibility and environmental triggers, like exposure to irritants (i.e. frequent hand-washing, or showers, harsh soaps, nickel in jewelry). Eczema may occur anywhere on the skin, however, the most common areas include the face, neck, hands, inner elbows, behind the knees, ankles and feet.

The main approach to treating Eczema is avoiding triggers that may cause acute flares.

As a daily skin care regimen:

- Use non irritant soaps (**Dove®**, **Cetaphil®**, **CeraVe®**, **Aveeno®**).
- Avoid long, hot showers or baths; instead use lukewarm water.
- Pat dry your skin after your shower.
- Apply thick, moisturizing creams such as **Cetaphil®**, **CeraVe®**, **Eucerin®**, **Aquaphor®**. Decreasing dryness with moisturizers will improve the barrier function of the skin and help improve symptoms of itching and pain.

During eczematous flares:

- Apply the prescribed topical medicine twice daily, or as directed. Take any oral antibiotics as directed.
- Once the dry patch has cleared, continue to apply non-prescription moisturizers twice a day.
- At times, over-the-counter oral anti-histamines (**Zyrtec®**, **Claritin®**) or prescription strength anti-histamines may relieve the itching, thus preventing itch/scratch cycles.

Other helpful ways to control eczema:

- Avoid frequent hand washing.
- Avoid harsh, rough clothing (i.e. wool, polyester).
- Avoid perfumes, colognes, fragranced skin products.
- Avoid fabric softeners and anti-static dryer sheets.
- Avoid sweating, especially at night.
- Humidify homes during the winter.
- Vacuum drapes, rugs, under beds frequently.
- Minimize animal dander (cats, dogs, pet rodents).
- If you must expose your hands to irritants, try to wear gloves. Consider using white cotton gloves (www.allerderm.com), even inside plastic gloves.