

# Atopic Eczema (Dermatitis)

**A**topic Eczema is a very common skin disease and may start at any age. There often are family members who have asthma, hay fever, or eczema because this is an inherited disease. We do not know the cause. It is not an allergy, although many things will irritate it and make it worse. It is not contagious. Like acne, it is not curable, but with general measures and routine use of some medications, it can be well controlled. While it may last for many years, sometimes children will outgrow it.

## TREATMENT

### Bathing/Showering

Take baths/showers as infrequently as you can stand and use tepid (warm) water. Use only mild soaps, such as Neutrogena, Dove unscented, Basis, Cetaphil, Aveeno. These do not irritate the skin. However, do not scrub or rub the skin vigorously during washing, pat body dry.

### Clothing

Avoid contact with wool including cashmere, merino and alpaca clothing and wool blankets. These may cause irritation.

### Eliminate/Avoid Triggers

Excess heat, perspiration and low humidity can make symptoms worse.

### Diet

There is some controversy as to whether diet has any effect on this disease but nothing specific has been proven. If you feel a particular food causes the eczema, you may try to avoid it and see what happens.

### Avoid Dry Skin

Dry skin always makes the eczema worse. Whenever the skin is dry or is washed, add lubrication to it by applying moisturizing cream to the skin; unscented products are better and should be applied 3 times a day especially after a bath or shower. Good creams are Keri, Purpose, Cetaphil, Nutradem, Silicone Glove (Avon), Aveeno, Lubriderm, Nutra Plus, Neutrogena, Aquaphor and Eucerin. Lotions are not as good as

creams because they are not heavy enough for dry skin and don't penetrate well.

### Rubbing

Rubbing and scratching will always make eczema worse. If necessary, we will prescribe medication to lessen the itch. It is sometimes necessary to wear gloves or socks to prevent inadvertent scratching. Keep samples of lubricating creams in several rooms of the house, in your handbag and in your car glove box in order or to have some always available.

### Hand Dermatitis

Eczema of the hand is worsened by dryness and rubbing, as well as by irritants that we encounter daily. These include almost any harsh disinfectant, wax, cleaner, spray, etc. Some foods, such as tomatoes, onions, potatoes, and citrus fruits may be irritating to the skin also. Regular use of gloves to avoid these irritants is essential for keeping eczema under control. The best for cleaning or heavy work are Playtex cotton lined rubber gloves.

### Facial Dermatitis

This condition also is worsened by any foreign substance touching the skin. This includes makeup, fingernail polish, or soaps and detergents carried to the face by the fingers.

Specific medications are often required and are available from your health clinician.

**CONTACT HEALTH & WELLNESS IF YOU HAVE ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS.**

Helpful Website:

[http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health\\_Info/Atopic\\_Dermatitis/default.asp](http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Atopic_Dermatitis/default.asp)



**Health & Wellness**

603-862-9355 • [unh.edu/health](http://unh.edu/health) • @UNHHealth



ACCREDITATION ASSOCIATION  
for AMBULATORY HEALTH CARE, INC.