



Eczema

What is Eczema?

- Eczema is a chronic disease that causes the skin to become very itchy, red and even swollen.
- Atopic (allergic) dermatitis (eczema) is a common form of eczema.
- Allergic eczema affects about 10% of children.
- In young children, eczema usually appears on the face, chest, back and the outside of the wrists and ankles.
- In older children, eczema often appears on the hands, neck, behind the knees and on the inside of the elbows.
- Eczema usually starts before age 2 and often gets better by age 5.
- Eczema can run in families. If one parent has eczema or another allergic disease (asthma, hay fever or food allergy), the child has a greater chance of having eczema and other allergic diseases. The chances are even greater if both parents have eczema or allergies.
- You cannot catch eczema from someone else.
- Children have a 40% chance of outgrowing eczema by the time they become adults.

What Triggers Eczema?

- Certain things can trigger eczema and make it get worse.

- Things that may make eczema worse are:
 - Dry skin.
 - Viral infections and fever.
 - Irritants like soaps and fabric softeners.
 - Some fabrics such as wool or synthetic.
 - Stress.
 - Heat or sweating.
 - Dust or mold.
 - Skin infections.
 - Certain foods (rare).
- Cold, dry air in winter increases dry, itchy skin.
- Dry skin is itchy and will cause the child to scratch. Scratching will make eczema worse.
- Allergies to pets or dust mites can make eczema worse. An allergist can help identify possible allergic triggers.
- Learn what things trigger your child's eczema and avoid them.
- Avoiding foods rarely improves eczema and can lead to food allergies. Talk to your allergist before eliminating foods.

Treatment and Control of Eczema

- The goal in managing eczema is to keep skin **moist**:
 - Give short baths in warm water every day.
 - Use mild unscented soaps at the end of the bath only when needed.
 - Gently pat the skin dry.
 - Use a **generous** amount of thick unscented moisturizer immediately **after each bath** and **at least one more time each day**.



- Use an unscented moisturizer that comes in a tub or a jar. They work better than lotions.
- Apply medicated creams prescribed by your doctor on areas that are red, swollen or itchy. Follow your doctor’s instructions on how to apply them.
- Keep your child’s fingernails short.
- Dress your child in cotton clothing. Wash the clothes in mild, unscented detergent and double rinse with clean water. Do not use fabric softeners in the dryer.
- Keep your home cool, especially the bedroom.

Note: Wet wraps and Bleach Baths are usually prescribed by your doctor if needed. Ask your allergy educator for instructions on how to use them.

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Allergy and Asthma Education

Other Eczema Treatments

Your Doctor may recommend:

Wet Wrap Therapy

- Use when skin becomes very dry, red and itchy.
- Helps get moisture back into the skin and helps the medicated creams and moisturizers work better.
- Involves applying creams and a wet layer of clothing directly to inflamed skin followed by a dry layer.

**Family Information Library-
HSC Children’s Hospital**

Items can be mailed to you free of charge-visit:
www.hsc.mb.ca/family-info-library.html
to search our catalogue of resources.
Phone: 204-787-1012
Email: familylibrary@hsc.mb.ca

Bleach Baths

- Involves adding a small amount of bleach to bath water.
- Used to decrease bacteria on the skin that can lead to skin infections.