

Caring for your Child's Eczema

Atopic dermatitis, also known as eczema, is a chronic skin problem. It is a frustrating and stressful disease for families to deal with as it can flare up unexpectedly and can cause terrible itching. We do not know what causes eczema, and there is no cure for it. However, eczema can be managed by following a daily skin-care routine. In addition, many children's eczema will improve as they get older.

Symptoms of Eczema

Children with eczema have very dry skin. Their skin dries out very quickly and often itches and may crack. This cracked skin may become infected. On infants and young children, eczema is most likely to affect the face, body, the outside of the arms and legs. In older children, the skin may appear thick and scaly. At this age, eczema is most likely to affect skin folds such as the neck, under arms and behind the knees.

Managing Eczema

Most parents find that they can control their child's eczema by following the daily skincare routine as outlined below. The most important part of the routine is to keep your child's skin moist so it does not dry out.

1. Keep your baths short. Try to limit the bath to 5 minutes each day. Use lukewarm water. The hotter the water, the more it will dry out the skin.
2. Use a soapless cleanser or soap substitute. Soaps also remove the skin's natural oils, so we recommend using either Cetaphil or Cerave cleansers, or Dove for sensitive skin.
3. Pat your child dry after bathing. Do not rub. Rubbing will irritate the skin even more.
4. While your child is still damp from his/her bath, apply the topical medication as directed. After applying the medication to affected areas, apply a moisturizer all over. We recommend Cetaphil Cream Cerave Cream, or Aquaphor Ointment (you can purchase these over-the-counter). Remember, children with eczema have dry skin all over. You will need to apply the medication one more time during the day, as well, followed by moisturizer.
5. Apply moisturizer to your child's body at least two more times during the day. In addition, apply moisturizer any time the skin is dry, flaky, scaly or red or at any time your child feels itchy.

