

ECZEMA

Eczema (Atopic dermatitis) is a chronic, very itchy, inflammatory skin disease that effects mostly kids but also affects many adults. It typically starts occurring before age 6.

Think of it this way. The skin gets dry >> cracks open >> invaders (such as bacteria, dog hair, pollen) enter the skin >> the immune system “turns on” to fight the invader >> the skin gets red and itchy.

What does it look like?

Clinical features of atopic dermatitis include:

- itching
- redness of the skin
- small bumps on the skin
- dry, flakey or scaly skin

Does it look different at different ages? Yes.

- In babies: it effects the arms, legs, cheeks, and scalp
- In older kids: it effects the side of the neck, elbow creases, and back of the knees
- In adults: it effects the wrists, hands, forearms and face

Can eczema cause skin changes?

Yes. The skin can thicken and appear darker. This usually goes away after a few months. In rare cases the skin can scar from scratching.

Treatment:

Moisturizing: If the skin is moist and intact then it will not crack and there will not be an immune reaction.

- This is the CORNERSTONE of treatment
- Bathing/Showering
- Twice a day
- Pat to dry »apply any prescribed medication » moisturize
- MUST put on moisturizer on after bathing/showering
- No oil in the water
- Moisturizers:
 - Every time you think of it or change a diaper >> use the moisturizer
 - Cereve: spreads wonderfully on wet skin
 - Aquafor: thick, great on dry skin
 - Vaseline: use as a top layer to “lock in” the moisturizer
 - Aveeno: doesn't really work
- SUPERCHARGE moisturizing with WET WRAPS. This sounds bizarre but it really works!

- Wet a cotton clothing item with warm water, ring out well, then place against the skin effected by eczema
- Put 1-2 layers of dry clothing on top
- Can keep the child warm with extra blankets or heaters
- Head to bed for the night

The skin will be AMAZING in the morning. For example:

- If the hands are effected: use cotton mittens
- If the feet are effected: use cotton socks
- If the legs are effected: use cotton PJ pants
- If the chest/back id effected: use a cotton onesie

Steroids:

If the immune system is turned on, these medications will calm it down. They have been used for eczema or over 40 years and are the standard of care.

How to use them:

- They are the “cheery on top” of the moisturizing treatment discussed above. Use them when the eczema is flaring but KEEP MOISTERIZING.
- Our clinic MDs will prescribe the potency (strength) of steroid we think your child needs and give you exact instructions on how to use it. Examples include:
 - Hydrocortisone
 - Desonide
 - Dermasmooth
 - Protopic or Eladil
 - These are medications that change how your immune system works and reduce the immune reaction in a different way than steroids.
 - They are great for maintaining calm skin and preventing eczema flares

WARNING: The internet is full of frightening things about these medications. They are safe, effective and widely used. If you have any concerns please talk to one of our MDs