Atopic eczema advice for parents and carers of children and young people

Introduction
This leaflet gives you advice about mild to moderate eczema and its treatment.

What is atopic eczema?
Atopic eczema is a common childhood skin condition that tends to come and go. The skin can become very dry, flaky and red which can itch causing scratching which can lead to further skin damage. The skin may also blister or leak fluid.

There is no known single cause of atopic eczema.

Between 60 and 70 out of 100 children usually grow out of eczema by the time they reach the age of 11.

Things that can make eczema worse are irritants such as soap products, house dust, mite sensitivity, woollen clothing next to the skin and infection. It is rare for food allergies to cause eczema.

Treatment
Emollients (medical moisturising creams)
Emollients stop the skin from drying out and form a protective layer on the skin (skin barrier). They need to be used at least twice a day and more often if possible.

• Emollients are to be spread all over the body in a downward direction
• Always wash your hands before applying the emollient
• To try to stop infection, use a spoon to remove the ointment from the pot. Do not use your fingers
• Emollients may also be prescribed as a wash product.

Advice for severe eczema is the same but there may be stronger treatments available.

Take care
Be aware that emollients in the bath or shower can be very slippery.
Emollients are a fire hazard and along with clothing can catch fire when too close to naked flames including cigarettes. We strongly advise you not to smoke near your child.

**Topical steroids (treatment applied to the skin)**

- These treatments calm inflammation and speed up the healing of the skin
- Steroids should be used where the eczema is red, sore and itchy. Steroids tend to be used **once a day** until the eczema is under control
- Make sure that you leave a gap of at least 30 minutes between putting on the steroid and emollient
- Your child may be prescribed different strengths of steroids to use. Only mild steroids should be used on the face
- Your child may be advised to increase or reduce the strength of steroid cream depending on where the eczema is and how severe it is.

**Infection**

Infected eczema usually looks red and may weep and form a golden dry crust or pus-filled blisters. Itching may get worse. Sometimes, the cold sore virus can infect eczema and spread very quickly. You will see lots of small blisters with red rings and your child may feel unwell. In both cases, you need to take your child to your GP as soon as possible. Antibiotics or antiviral treatments may be prescribed.

**Further information**

The National Eczema Society has lots of helpful advice including problems with poor sleep, itching, scratching and treatments. Please contact them using the details below:

**National Eczema Society**  
Tel: 0800 089 1122  
Website: [www.eczema.org](http://www.eczema.org)
Care plan

Emollients

Wash product

Shampoo and scalp treatment

Steroids for the face

Steroid for the body