

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

Atopic Dermatitis 101 for Parents

MAJ Nathaniel R. Watts, DO; MAJ James M. Silcox, DO

Ronald Januchowski, DO, FACP, Editor • Paula Gregory, DO, MBA, CHCQM, FAHQ, Health Literacy Editor

WHAT IS ATOPIC DERMATITIS?

Atopic dermatitis is more commonly called eczema. Eczema is a non-contagious skin condition causing dry, itchy, red skin. Eczema frequently affects the creases of joints, particularly the elbows and knees, but can occur anywhere on the body.

WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

Eczema is also common in children and tends to run in families. It is often diagnosed in children before the age of four who also have seasonal allergies, hay fever, food allergies or asthma.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

Eczema is usually diagnosed by having a doctor examine your child's skin. The majority of the time, no other testing is needed.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

- Bathe your child every night in lukewarm water (hot water can irritate the skin).
- Avoid scrubbing irritated areas with rough washcloths or sponges.
- Allow the skin to air dry or pat the skin dry with a towel.
- Apply medication prescribed by your doctor (often a topical steroid) only to the affected skin, while it is still damp.
- Apply moisturizer to the rest of the body to lock in the moisture.
- Remember to use moisturizers at least two times per day and when the skin feels itchy or looks dry.
- Use moisturizers that are ointments or creams because they are better than lotions for treating dry skin.
- Avoid irritants such as:
 - Tobacco smoke
 - Fragrances (laundry detergents, cleansers, moisturizers)
 - Heat
- Give bleach baths by dissolving ½ cup of bleach in a full bathtub of water and soak your child for 15 minutes two to three times per week to help prevent infection.

WHEN TO SEE THE DOCTOR?

- If the rash worsens, spreads or you have any concerns it might be infected
- If your child is itching a lot and/or having difficulty sleeping at night
- If the treatments above are not improving the rash or your child's symptoms
- If you have been using a topical steroid (prescribed by your doctor) for more than two weeks with no signs of improvement

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