

ECZEMA

Eczema is a condition of excessive dryness, itching, and sensitivity of the skin that occurs in about 3 % of children. The basic cause of eczema is not known, but it is more common in children that later develop allergic problems like asthma or hayfever. It is the scratching of the skin that causes the rash of eczema. The more the skin is scratched, the worse the rash becomes. The worse the rash becomes, the itchier the skin becomes. In order for the skin to heal, this "itch-scratch" cycle must be interrupted:



1) **Lubrication:** The most important aspect of skin care for eczema is the use of skin moisturizers or lubricants. Apply skin lubricants such as Vaseline, Lubriderm, Eucerin, Carmol, Aquacare, Neutraderm, or Alpha-Keri one to three times a day. These creams are best rubbed on immediately after bathing while the body is still somewhat wet.

2) **Bathing:** Bathing daily is fine as long as lubricants are used immediately afterwards. Use water that is only slightly warm, not hot. Never use bubble bath. Use Dove, Basis, or Neutrogena soap. Between bathing, use Cetaphil lotion for cleansing. This can be rubbed on the skin without water and then gently washed off with a soft cloth. This provides excellent cleaning and lubricating of the skin. Swimming is generally tolerated well, but the skin should be lubricated afterward.

3) **Clothing:** wear soft cotton clothing whenever possible, including cotton underwear. Other fabrics, especially wool and polyesters, are more irritating and "breathe" less well. When washing clothes, avoid harsh detergents. Use Dreft or Ivory Snow.

4) **Temperature:** Fairly constant room temperatures are desirable to minimize sweating and itching. Air conditioning is helpful in the summer. A humidifier may help in the winter when home heating dries the air.

5) **Other Tips:** Clip fingernails as short as possible to discourage scratching. Socks or mittens may be placed over an

infant's hands at night if necessary. Children with hand eczema should avoid dishwashing or should wear gloves.

6) Topical Medications:

A) Apply _____ three times a day to affected areas as soon as a new spot is noted. Apply a small amount and rub it into the skin.

B) For weeping areas, warm compresses soaked in a solution of one Domeboro tablet to one quart of water may be applied for 15 minutes 3 times a day. If weeping continues, make an appointment with your pediatrician to make sure that a skin infection has not developed.

7) Oral Medications:

A) Give _____ at bedtime for itching. This may also be given up to four times a day if needed to control itching.

8) Miscellaneous: Skin tests and allergy shots are not helpful in eczema. Food elimination may occasionally be recommended by your doctor to see if the rash may be worsened by particular foods.

Keep your child away from people with active "cold sores" or fever blisters, as herpes can cause a more severe skin infection in children with eczema.



If the above suggestions and medications fail to keep your child's rash under control, please make another appointment with your doctor.