

## Atopic Dermatitis, Eczema, and Dry Skin in Infants and Children

These “**itchy skin**” disorders are common among infants and children who tend to develop allergies. The skin of these children is sensitive, easily irritated, and may be more dry and itchy than normal skin. Scratching may cause even more itching, and an “itch-scratch-rash-itch” cycle is often started. Avoiding skin irritants and keeping the skin well lubricated are important in controlling these problems.

### Treatment

#### ■ Bathing

- **During flare-ups** (when redness or rash seems worse), bathe or shower the child less often than usual.
- Use **mild soaps** (such as Dove®, Basis®, Purpose®, or Lowilla®). Or, in place of soap and water, use a **cleansing lotion** (such as Cetaphil®, Aquanil®, or Eucerin®).
- Do NOT use soaps, bath oils, or lotions that contain detergents, antibacterials (ingredients that kill bacteria), or perfumes.

#### ■ Lubricating the Skin

- Apply lubricants after the child’s bath or shower, while the skin is still moist.
- Use a **bath oil** or **lotion** (such as Vaseline®, Eucerin®, Moisturel®, Neutrogena®, Aquaphor®, or Complex 15®).
- Do NOT use scented hand lotions or oils.

#### ■ Preventing Irritation

- **Keep fingernails cut short** and smooth to prevent the “itch-scratch-rash-itch” cycle. Also keep them clean.
- Dress the child in **soft cotton clothing** that is well-rinsed and free of starch and fabric softeners.

- Do NOT dress the child in clothing made from wool, fur, or other “scratchy” fabrics.
- Wash clothing with soaps such as Dreft® or Ivory Flakes® that do NOT contain detergents. Or, use white detergents such as Tide® or Cheer-Free® that do NOT contain blue granules. Do NOT add anything to the rinse cycle (such as Downy® or Bounce®).
- To decrease itching, use Benadryl® liquid—which is taken by mouth—especially at bed time. (Do NOT apply Benadryl or Caladryl® preparations to the skin.)

### Contact the doctor if:

- Your child’s rash becomes weepy (moist) or appears to be infected.

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Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any specific brand names; any similar products may be used.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If your child has persistent health problems or if you have further questions, please consult your health care provider.

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