



KAISER PERMANENTE®

Eczema

Eczema—also known as atopic dermatitis—is a skin condition that can affect people of all ages. Although eczema is often worse during infancy and typically improves by the age of two, some people continue to have problems with it all their lives. Additionally, eczema is often commonly known to affect people with asthma, hay fever, and other allergies. However, it can affect people without these conditions. Finally, children may be more likely to have eczema if their parents have had the problem.

Symptoms of eczema include an itchy, scaly rash that may ooze a clear fluid. These patches may become infected, especially if you scratch them too much. In children, eczema tends to appear on the face, scalp, buttocks, thighs and torso. In adults, it most often affects the neck, inside the elbows, and backs of the knees. However, it can appear anywhere on the body.

Here are five tips for treating eczema:

- 1.) Take short baths or showers in lukewarm—not hot—water. Either don't use soap or use a gentle soap, such as Dove, Basis, Aveeno, Neutrogena, Purpose, or Lowilla. You can also use a non-soap cleanser, such as Cetaphil or Aveeno.
- 2.) After bathing, pat your skin dry instead of rubbing it. While your skin is still damp, apply a lubricating cream to your skin, such as Vaseline, Nutraderm, DML, or Moisturel. If you have small itchy areas, try using an over-the-counter one percent hydrocortisone cream on them. However, use this sparingly on your face and genitals.
- 3.) If you itch a lot, try taking an oral antihistamine, such as Benadryl—which can also help you sleep. However, don't use antihistamine and antiseptic creams and sprays because they tend to irritate the skin.
- 4.) Use a humidifier in your bedroom.
- 5.) Don't use a fabric softener when washing clothes—especially if you find that it irritates your skin. Also, use a mild detergent and run your clothes and bedding through the rinse cycle twice.

You should call your health care professional if you think that your eczema has become infected. If an infection has set in, the patches will have developed a crust and sores will appear and will ooze a clear liquid. You should also call your health care professional if a red, patchy rash appears on your face and is accompanied by joint pain and fever. Finally, call your health care professional if itching makes it difficult for you to sleep or if home treatment doesn't seem to be working after one to two weeks.



For additional health information you can trust:

- Log on to our members-only Web site at www.kaiserpermanente.org/california, then click the "Kaiser Permanente Members Only" button
- Visit your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center
- Check your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone messages at 1-800-33 ASK ME (1-800-332-7563)

To get your free Handbook and Healthphone Directory, call 1-800-464-4000.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor or other health care professional.

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REGIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION