



Eczema Awareness Week: 1 – 7 September 2008

Moisturisers key to managing eczema cycle

Don't wait – hydrate. Eczema skin is thirsty skin. Quench the thirst, be wise & moisturise.

Eczema experts are encouraging more than 1.5 million Australians suffering from eczema this week (Eczema Awareness Week) to use moisturisers as part of their daily skin treatment regimen to help soothe, hydrate and protect the skin barrier from breakdown.

Moisturisers play a pivotal role in any management/treatment plan for all dry skin conditions, particularly eczema. In fact, good eczema management is impossible without regular use of a moisturiser. For mild eczema and many cases of moderate eczema, moisturisers combined with good, general skin care measures can be used to successfully treat the condition. Even when prescription medicine is required to treat the affected area, moisturisers should be used regularly and as early as possible, to obtain maximum benefit.

According to leading Sydney dermatologist and Director of Training (NSW) for the Australasian College of Dermatologists, Dr Phillip Artemi, understanding the benefits of moisturisers and how and when to use them, is a major step towards controlling mild-to-moderate cases of eczema.

“People often perceive moisturisers to be ‘inactive’ and do not understand the important role they play in controlling eczema.

“Many people tend to under-use moisturiser because its application can often prove time-consuming, tedious and inconvenient,” said Dr Artemi.

“But when used correctly, as part of a daily skin care treatment regime, and earlier rather than later in the eczema cycle, moisturisers can become effective, ‘active’ treatments.”

More than 1.5 million Australians suffer from different degrees of eczema and approximately 30 per cent of the population will suffer from dry skin at some stage during their lives. Because eczema skin is dry skin, it has a defective barrier function. It is therefore unable to retain moisture and block irritants and allergens such as dust, grass and wool fibres. This results in eczema patches which can be red, crusty, scaly, flaky, weepy and itchy. Moisturisers help to maintain and repair the skin barrier and can be used at the first sign of symptoms to help control eczema.

Tina Aspres, pharmacist, author and clinical researcher from Dermal Research Laboratories, Sydney says there are a number of key features to look out for when choosing a moisturiser.

“It’s important to choose a product that is fragrance-free, ideally with a pH of around 5.5. Avoid ‘cosmetic moisturisers’, as they may contain sunscreen, fragrance, antioxidants, anti-aging ingredients and other chemicals. **more#**



bee eczema educated!

"Hypoallergenic products are the least likely to irritate the skin. If possible, test the moisturiser on a small area of skin first for a few weeks to ensure that it does not sting, burn or irritate the skin. Never be guided by price or fancy packaging. A moisturiser should be affordable, as you need to use it several times a day," said Ms Aspres.

About moisturisers

Moisturisers are divided into three groups – lotions, creams and ointments. Lotions contain more water and fewer oils than creams, so they spread easily when applied. They act quickly and are useful for hairy areas. But overall, they are not very effective in moisturising dry skin. However, they can be useful if applied frequently in helping with dry skin management.

Creams contain a mixture of water and oils and like lotions, feel light and spread easily when applied to the skin. They also need to be reapplied often, as they do not readily penetrate very dry skin. Creams are ideal for weeping eczema and daytime use.

Ointments do not contain water (or only a very small amount) and therefore tend to be thick and greasy. Some people find them cosmetically unacceptable. They are ideal for very dry and thickened skin and perfect for night-time use.

Dr Artemi says it's important to use moisturisers liberally and frequently – every hour or two if the skin is very dry, or at least three times a day.

"Apply the moisturiser gently, ideally after bathing or showering while your skin is still damp (within three minutes) and while the water remains trapped in your skin to help lock in moisture.

"Continue to use the moisturiser daily, even when your eczema patches have improved or cleared. This will help to prevent frequent and severe flares."

According to President of the Eczema Association of Australasia, Ms Cheryl Talent, "Eczema is a serious skin disease which has been shown to be comparable to, or even worse than living with conditions such as insulin-dependent diabetes.

"Understanding the skin barrier and how to protect it, is a major step forward in controlling eczema and improving the quality of life of those affected."

For more information about moisturisers or to participate in the Eczema Association of Australasia Inc's Moisturiser Survey, visit www.eczema.org.au or contact the Association on 1300 300 182.

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To coordinate an interview with Dr Phillip Artemi, Tina Aspres or Cheryl Talent, or for more information, please call the Eczema Association of Australasia Inc on 07 3206 3633.