

UNDERSTANDING ECZEMA

Many people suffer with eczema. In fact, eczema affects up to 30% of the Australian population at some time during their life. The most common age for babies to develop eczema is between two and six months of age.

WHAT IS ECZEMA?

Eczema, or dermatitis as it is sometimes called, is a disorder which results in dry, inflamed and sometimes weeping or infected skin. It can cause redness and intense itching. The most common form is Atopic. Although it can look unpleasant, eczema is not contagious. With treatment, the inflammation of eczema can be reduced.

BASIC TREATMENTS

Cleansers

Use a soap-free wash and/or add a suitable bath oil to lukewarm bathwater. Aromatherapy and fragranced oils are best avoided.

Emollients (Moisturisers)

These should be used frequently to keep dry skin moisturised and lubricated and to minimise itchiness. Always apply with clean hands. Moisturisers make up the basis of eczema treatment and should be applied regularly and daily, even during times when skin is clear of eczema.

Topical Steroids

Topical Steroids are used to treat flares. They are applied to the skin and act to reduce inflammation. They should be used under the supervision of a Doctor. Topical steroids are to be used in short, sharp bursts to bring eczema under control and are not intended for long-term use.

OTHER TREATMENTS

There are many other treatments available such as wet-wrapping, natural therapies, immunosuppressant creams, probiotics, etc.

SOME COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What Causes Eczema?

The causes of eczema are many and varied and depend on the particular type of eczema that a person has. Generally, both genetic and environmental factors can be attributed to eczema. Atopic eczema is thought to be a hereditary condition, being genetically linked. Some people with atopic eczema are more sensitive to allergens in the environment. There is an excessive reaction by the immune system which produces inflamed, itchy, irritated and sore skin. Sufferers of eczema may also suffer with other atopic conditions such as asthma and hay fever.

Other types of eczema are caused by irritants such as soaps, detergents, chemicals and other allergens such as nickel, rubber, latex, wool and other synthetic fabrics.

Which type of Eczema Do I have?

The first step in effective treatment of eczema is a correct diagnosis from a Doctor. It may be necessary to be referred to a Dermatologist.

Is There a Cure for Eczema?

There is currently no cure for eczema, though research continues to shed new light. Eczema can be treated and managed to minimise flares.

Are Steroid Creams Safe to Use?

Steroid Creams come in different strengths, and the strength of the steroid that a Doctor prescribes depends on the age of the patient, the severity of the condition and where it is being applied on the body. As long as the steroids are used as directed by your Doctor, for a short period of time, the likelihood of side effects is very rare.

Can Changing Diet Help?

The role of diet in the management of eczema is unclear. Dietary investigation can be quite helpful for those where treatment is failing to respond, or flares recur frequently. Any dietary changes should always be carried out under advice from a Dietician.

Will My Child Grow out of their Eczema?

There are no guarantees, however, research has shown that 60-70% of children are virtually clear of the condition by the time they reach their mid-teens.

How Can I Manage Eczema?

There are many ways to minimize the discomfort and distress which eczema can bring. The mainstay of management is an effective skin care routine. Eczema is a highly individual condition and what works for one sufferer may not be suitable for another.

The Eczema Association of Australasia Inc (EAA) is an independent Australasian wide organisation founded in January 1994 as a non-profit registered charity and relies on memberships and donations along with corporate sponsorship to achieve its purpose:

- To support and educate Eczema sufferers and their carers;
- To improve & broaden the availability of medical treatment & supplies for eczema sufferers;
- To greatly increase public awareness on all aspects of Eczema and its impact.

The EAA offers its members a comprehensive range of services including FREE product samples, information sheets on a wide range of eczema topics and a quarterly newsletter, A-Topic News.

For further information visit

www.eczema.org.au

or call

1300 300 182

Disclaimer: It is not the policy of the Eczema Association of Australasia Inc to recommend or endorse any product or treatment. It is part of the role of the Association to provide information on a wide range of products and treatments to keep those involved with eczema as fully informed as possible as to all options available.