



Helping parents understand Atopic Eczema in children from birth up to the age of 12 years

Eczema is a common skin condition which has no single cause. We know that genetic factors are important (i.e. eczema can be an inherited condition) but other common triggers can cause eczema too.

These include irritation from soaps and detergents, wearing wool next to the skin, overheating at night and contact with water and dusty materials. Infection and exposure to certain foods, pets, grass and tree pollens can also cause eczema.

- While eczema is a common condition, every child's skin is different and it's important to understand the specific triggers that can cause it to flare, as well as the treatments that work best for them.
- Eczema causes the skin to become red, dry, flaky and very itchy. The itching causes your child to scratch, which can be particularly problematic at night, leading to disrupted sleep not just for your child but the whole family.

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For additional fact sheets see www.ihv.org.uk

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The Start4Life Information Service for Parents provides free information and advice. Find out more at: bit.ly/1iC4rrO

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- Eczema is usually treated with a combination of creams which include products for washing and moisturising the skin (emollients), and steroid (topical corticosteroids) creams/ointments to treat the eczema flares. Other treatments are available but these are usually only used by skin specialists, for more information – take a look at the National Eczema society bit.ly/1uCmljw and the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD) bit.ly/1iVPIrU
- Soaps and detergents shouldn't be used if your child has eczema, you should also avoid using shampoo on babies under 1 year. Emollients can be used to wash and moisturise your child's skin - ask your Health Visitor, GP or pharmacist to show you how to use them. Use the emollient every day and regularly throughout the day, even when your child's skin is clear. If the emollient comes in a pot, use a clean spoon to extract the cream rather than your hands, which helps to reduce the risk of infection.
- Topical corticosteroids are treatments that reduce inflammation and are used to control flares of atopic eczema. They come in different strengths (potencies) and the potency used will be based on how severe the eczema is. If you're feeling anxious about using these treatments have a chat with your Health Visitor or GP who can give you advice on using them safely.
- One of the common causes of eczema flaring is infection. If your child's skin becomes very red, itchy, blistered, wet, weepy or crusty, it may be infected and you should get advice from your Health Visitor or GP.
- The cause of a child's eczema is difficult to establish and for that reason health care specialists advise against the use of allergy tests available on the high street. If you are worried about any aspect of your child's health you should speak to your Health Visitor or GP, who can provide reliable, expert advice on treating your child's eczema. Your GP can also arrange a referral to a specialist if necessary.
- Alternative treatments, remedies and dietary changes are popular with some parents as a way of helping to relieve their child's eczema. Always discuss these with your Health Visitor or GP before exploring these options.

Useful websites:

National Eczema Society:
bit.ly/1uCmljw

NHS Choices (2012) Atopic Eczema [Accessed 8th April 2014]:
bit.ly/1yUNO5d

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2007) Information for the Public. Atopic Eczema in children up to 12 years [Accessed 8th April 2014]:
bit.ly/1uNOunY