



Government of Western Australia  
Child and Adolescent Health Service



Perth Children's Hospital



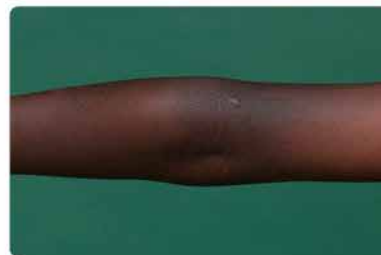
# A practical guide to eczema care

Department of Dermatology  
Perth Children's Hospital



# Today's session

- What is eczema?
- What causes eczema?
- Things that can make eczema worse.
- General measures – every day skin care.
- Specific measures – when the eczema flares.
- When to get help.



# What is eczema?

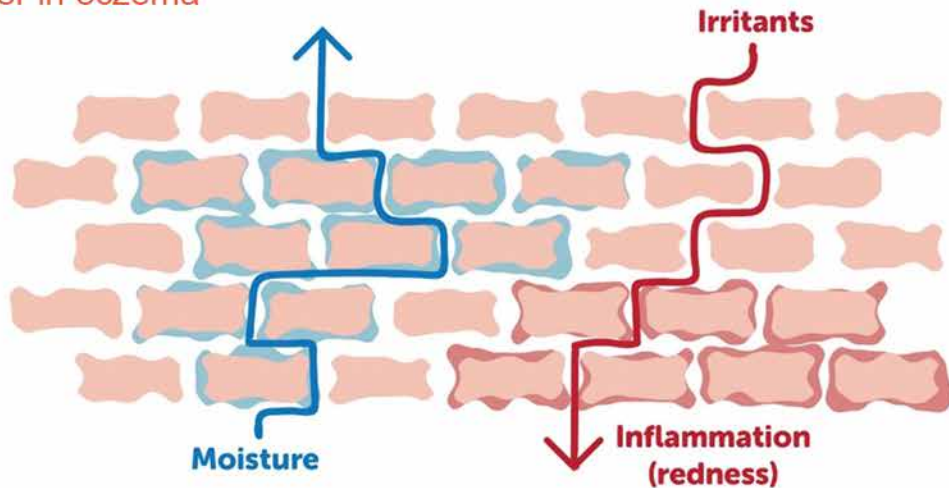
- Eczema (also called atopic dermatitis) affects the skin causing **redness, rough skin, itching** and sometimes **skin infection**.
- **Weeping** and **crusting** are signs of infected eczema.
- There is no cure at present, but eczema can be managed well for most children.
- Eczema is very common in children.
- It can affect sleep, quality of life, growth, development, behaviour and mood.



## The skin and eczema

- Healthy skin provides a protective barrier.
- This barrier helps keep moisture in the skin cells and keep harmful things out.
- In people with eczema, the skin barrier doesn't work as well.

### The skin barrier in eczema



## What causes eczema?

- Many things interact to cause eczema including **genetics**, our **immune system** and the **environment**.
- Eczema tends to run in families and people with eczema often have other allergic conditions such as asthma and allergic rhinitis (hay fever) but not all children with eczema get these other problems.



# What can make eczema worse

There is often no single trigger for an eczema flare.



## Heat

(bath, over-dressing, heaters in bedroom)



## Dryness

(blow heaters, soap, bubble bath)



## Prickle

(tags, rough seams, sand, grass)



## Teething and irritants

(saliva associated with teething, dummies, lip licking)



## Infections

(viral, bacterial)



## Skin care products

with fragrances, perfumes, and some types of plant extracts



## Seasonal change



## Vaccinations

(may cause a temporary flare)

## Every day skin care

### 1. Daily bath or shower.



No longer  
than 5 mins



### 2. Moisturise generously over the whole body.



## Choosing suitable skin products



In general it is better to **avoid** skin products which contain **nut oils** and **food derived proteins**.



**Avoid goat milk** and **soy products** for washes and moisturisers.



**Avoid** products containing **soap**, **fragrance**, **perfume** and **plant extracts** (lavender, rosemary, tea tree) as these may irritate the skin.



## When the eczema flares

(rough skin, red and itchy)



1. Bathe or shower then pat the skin dry.



No longer  
than 5 mins



2. Apply steroid cream or ointment to all eczema areas once a day, or as prescribed, until the eczema has gone and skin feels normal to touch.



3. Then apply moisturiser to the whole body after the steroid. Creams, thick creams and ointments work better than lotions.



## About topical corticosteroids

- For treating eczema, **corticosteroids** are usually prepared in a **cream** or **ointment** and are applied topically (directly onto the skin).
- Topical corticosteroids work by **reducing inflammation** and helping to control an over-reactive response of the immune system at the site of eczema.
- There are many misconceptions about the side effects of topical corticosteroids. However these treatments are very safe and patients are encouraged to follow the treatment regimen as recommended by your treating healthcare professional.



## Wet dressings

- Wet dressings improve eczema by **increasing the effect of the steroid** and **reducing itch**.
- After a bath or shower, apply your prescribed steroid cream or ointment to all eczema areas.
- Then apply damp clothing to the skin followed by a dry layer. Remove after 20 minutes then apply moisturiser.



Cool compresses can be used for the cheeks.

## Preventing skin infections

- Wash hands before and after applying eczema treatments.
- If you are using a moisturiser in a tub and if your child is prone to skin infections, remove the moisturiser from the tub with a clean spoon or spatula.
- **Bleach baths** may also be recommended by your treating clinician. Bleach baths are very safe. The final concentration of bleach when diluted in water is similar to chlorinated pool water. Bleach baths are usually recommended twice a week for 3 months, but your treating clinician will advise you on this.

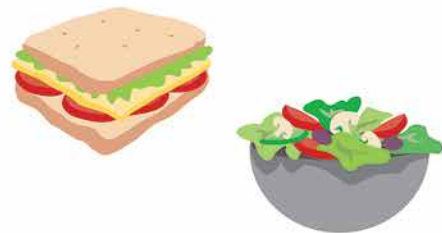


# The importance of a healthy lifestyle

- This is important not just for your child's skin but for all aspects of their health and happiness.

## This includes:

- **Healthy eating habits.** Encourage fresh foods and reduce processed foods.
- **Outdoor play** – time in nature is good for general wellbeing by reducing stress, increasing activity and even promoting healthy microbiomes – the bacteria that are good for immune health.





## Should I be worried about food allergy?

- It is uncommon for food to be the cause of eczema.
- Unless there is a clear history of food causing allergic symptoms (such as hives, facial swelling, vomiting), allergy testing is not generally recommended. Eczema flare alone does not indicate a true food allergy.
- Food(s) should not routinely be removed from the diet just because a child has eczema.
- Unless there is a known or suspected allergy, all infants should be given a wide range of foods including smooth peanut paste, cooked egg, dairy and wheat products in their first year of life.

## When to get help

- If you are worried about your child's eczema.
- Waking in the night because of eczema.
- Not going to school.
- Needing another script for prescribed eczema treatments.
- If the skin looks infected (red, painful, weeping, crusted, or blistered).
- If the eczema is not clearing within 2 weeks of following your eczema treatment plan.



# Eczema resources for families

## Perth Children's Hospital – Health Facts

- Eczema - Caring for
- Eczema - Diluted bleach baths
- Eczema - What is
- Food allergy - a guide for introducing foods



## Nip Allergies in the Bub

- Eczema videos and infographics
- Translated eczema resources
- Infant feeding and allergy prevention



## Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia

For guidance and support call 1300 728 000



## Eczema Support Australia

- School Kit
- Free psychology support services



## Operation Itch

Eczema video developed by the South Metro Health Service







## References

- ASCIA – Eczema and Food Allergy Fast Facts. 2020.
- Nip Allergies in the Bub website. Last accessed 22 March 2023.  
Nip Allergies in the Bub - A Food Allergy Prevention Project ([preventallergies.org.au](http://preventallergies.org.au))
- Medical Illustrations, Perth Children's Hospital. Images used with permission for education from families and must not be reproduced.
- Patient Fact Sheet. How to apply topical corticosteroids for the treatment of eczema. The Australasian College of Dermatologists.

# Acknowledgements



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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.



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