

## Eczema

Your child has been diagnosed or suspected to have Eczema and may have any of the following symptoms:

- Chronic dry skin
- Itching is main symptom. If it doesn't itch, it's not eczema.
- The rash becomes red or even raw and weepy with flare-ups and itching.
- Average onset at 3 months old. Range: 1-6 months old. Usually begins by 2 years old.

### Care & Treatment

- **Moisturizing Creams or Ointment for Dry Skin**

- All children with eczema have dry sensitive skin.
- The skin needs a moisturizing cream applied once or twice daily. Examples are Eucerin or Cetaphil creams.
- Apply the creams after a 5 or 10-minute bath.
- To trap the moisture in the skin, apply the cream while the skin is still damp and within 3 minutes of leaving the bath or shower.
- The steroid cream should be applied to any itchy spots first, with the moisturizing cream as the top layer.
- While most parents prefer creams, moisturizing ointments are sometimes needed in the winter. Examples are Vaseline and Aquaphor.

- **Steroid Creams**

- Apply steroid creams only to itchy or red spots (not to the normal skin).
- Most children have 2 types of steroid creams: (1) A mild steroid cream (often OTC 1% hydrocortisone cream) to treat any pink spots with mild itching. (2) Another stronger cream (a prescription steroid cream such as Synalar or Triamcinolone) to treat any spots with severe itching. Never apply this stronger cream to the face or genital area.
- Apply these creams as directed or 2 times per day.
- After the rash quiets down, apply it once per day for an additional week. Then return to just using moisturizing creams.
- When you travel with your child, always take the steroid cream with you. If it starts to run out, buy some more or get the prescription refilled.

- **Bathing - Avoid Soaps**

- Give one bath a day for 10 minutes in lukewarm water. Reason: water-soaked skin feels less itchy. Follow the bath with a moisturizing cream to all the skin.
- Avoid all soaps. (eczema is very sensitive to soaps, especially bubble bath.) There is no safe soap for young children with eczema. Young children don't need any soaps and can usually be cleaned using warm water.
- Teenagers do need soap for washing under the arms, the groin and the feet. Use a hypoallergenic soap such as Dove or Cetaphil cleanser. Keep the soap off any areas with a rash.

- **Itching- Remove Irritants and Triggers**

- For increased itching from playing in the grass, being around animals, or swimming, give your child a quick shower. Reason: to remove pollens, animal dander, chlorine or other irritating substances from the body and hair.
- Take off any itchy or tight clothing.

- At the first sign of any itching, apply the preventive steroid cream to the areas that itch. If unsure, apply 1% hydrocortisone cream OTC.
- Keep your child's fingernails cut short and smooth.
- Rinse your child's hands with water frequently to avoid infecting the eczema with germs from under the fingernails.
- For constant itching in young children, you can cover the hands with socks or gloves for a day until the itching is brought under control. Provide extra cuddling during this time.

### ● **Antihistamines**

- Many children with eczema need an antihistamine by mouth at bedtime. Reason: Scratching in bed can cause severe skin breakdown. It may also interfere with falling asleep.
- Give the antihistamine your child's doctor recommended.
- If none was recommended and your child is over 1 year old, give Benadryl (OTC) 1 hour before bedtime. (See Dosage Table.)
- If Benadryl is needed for more than a few days, switch to a long-acting antihistamine (such as Zyrtec or store brand cetirizine). Age limit: 6 months and older.
- Cetirizine dosing for 6 months to 2 years: 2.5 mL (2.5 mg) every 24 hours. For 2 years and older, follow package directions for dosing.

#### What to Expect

- Itching attacks (flare-ups) are to be expected.
- The goal is to treat all flare-ups quickly and vigorously. (Reason: to prevent skin damage, because healing can take many days)
- You should be able to get the eczema back under control with home treatment.

#### When to Call

- Itching is not under control after 2 days of steroid cream
- Rash looks infected (spreading redness or pus)
- Your child becomes worse

#### Continue Self-Care at Home

- Eczema with increased itching but no complications

#### Call Office to be Seen Within 24-72 Hours

- Widespread eczema under poor control
- Age < 6 months and eczema difficult to control
- Many small bumps are present

#### Call Office to be Seen Urgently

- Many small blisters or punched-out ulcers occur
- Looks infected (spreading redness, pus, soft oozing scabs) without fever
- Localized rash is very painful to touch
- Fever that is unexplained
- Widespread severe itching after using steroid cream and oral Benadryl for over 24 hours

Go to ER Now

- Age < 12 weeks with fever 100.4° F (38.0° C) or higher by any route (rectal reading preferred)