

ECZEMA

PATIENT INFORMATION

Eczema is a general term used to describe a dry, red, scaly inflammatory skin condition that has several causes. It is interchangeable with the term dermatitis. The most common type of eczema is atopic eczema which most commonly presents in children. Other types of eczema may be caused by external triggers such as allergic contact dermatitis and irritant contact dermatitis. There are several patterns of eczema but they all have some important aspects of treatment in common.

AVOID TRIGGERS

Overheating: keep bathing temperature warm rather than hot and avoid overheating in bed and in clothing.

Abrasive surfaces: ensure clothing and bedding are smooth and unlikely to irritate the skin.

Avoid environmental irritants where possible e.g. dust, grass, sandpits, chlorine pools, sweat. This is difficult in children and patients exercising so pre-treating with moisturisers prior to exposure and showering and reapplying moisturisers soon after helps manage this situation.

Avoid detergents, soap, solvents as they irritate the skin.

MOISTURISERS (EMOLLIENTS)

Substitute a soap free cleanser or wash with sorbolene cream in the shower and avoid soap. There are many brands available from chemists and supermarkets.

Avoid perfumed products.

If using a bath substitute a bath oil or cleanser for soap.

Use a moisturiser liberally and often, particularly after bathing and after washing your hands if you have hand dermatitis.

Moisturisers come in different forms. Creams are generally white and rub into your skin and ointments are often clear and feel greasy. Ointments sit on your skin for a longer period of time but are often more effective when managing eczema. Patients may choose to use a combination of moisturisers as creams may be suitable before and during work and ointments more beneficial after work or on weekends when greasy skin is more acceptable. I can suggest some brands if required.

When applying moisturisers the application should be in the direction of hair growth rather than against it. This helps to prevent inflamed hair follicles.

Topical steroids will sometimes be prescribed but it is important to always follow these baseline instructions even when your eczema is not active. Keeping your skin in good condition by following these guidelines will help to improve your eczema and sometimes prevent exacerbations.

If you have any questions or problems during the course of your treatment please call:

Adelaide Skin & Eye Centre 8211 0000 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)