

Manging Eczema

Good management can help

Babies often get red, scaly skin known as eczema - one in eight might get it where there's a family history of allergic conditions like eczema, asthma or hay fever.

Babies often start to get eczema from two months. The symptoms are patches of red, dry and itchy skin on the face or behind the ears, and in the creases of the neck, knees and elbows. Your baby may scratch the itchy patches and the eczema can get infected as a result.

Most babies eventually grow out of eczema, but if you think your child has eczema, speak to your GP or health visitor. Do not cut out important foods such as milk, dairy products, wheat or eggs without discussing this with a health professional first. Your GP can tell you whether you or your child has eczema and start a treatment programme.

Eczema can affect your child's quality of life and may also affect sleep patterns which can make children irritable and frustrated. There are effective skin treatments to control and manage the symptoms. It can take some trial and error to find the most suitable treatment for your child.

Some people have triggers for their eczema such as allergies to house dust mites, pets, or certain foods. Seasons of the year (for example, in winter), or even emotional responses (such as stress), may cause eczema to worsen. However, a large number of eczema sufferers are not able to link a cause to their symptoms. It is essential that any known triggers are avoided.

Tips on soothing eczema

- Apply an unperfumed moisturiser (emollient) to the sore area several times a day. Apply with downward strokes.
- Avoid **soap**, **baby bath** and **bubble bath** as these can dry or irritate the skin.
- Try to keep the bedroom cool as getting hot and sweaty can make eczema worse.
- Eczema can get worse if your child has an allergic reaction to house dust mites. Steroid creams can stop eczema from getting worse. Only use as directed by your GP or pharmacist. Try to identify and avoid anything that irritates the skin or makes the problem worse, such as soap powder, animals, chemical sprays and cigarette smoke. Eliminate any of these if possible. Even second-hand smoke (passive smoking) can harm your baby.
- Some fabrics can irritate the skin. Try to avoid wool and nylon and stick to cotton instead.

Dust mites

Dust mites and their faeces can collect on soft toys. To reduce the problem, it's best to stick to one or two favourites. Each week, wash them at 60°C or put them in a plastic bag in the freezer for 24 hours to kill the mites. Wash bed linen at 60°C as well to get rid of the house dust mites.