

GP IN-SYNC

A monthly e-newsletter by
NUH GP Liaison Centre



GP Appointment
Hotline: +65 6772 2000

October 2015

Specialist in Focus



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Dr Soh Jian Yi graduated from the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore, with MBBS in 2004. He subsequently completed his Master of Medicine and obtained Membership in the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in 2010. He completed his subspecialty training in Allergy and Immunology in the National University Hospital and is a member of the American Academy of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology.

He is a practising paediatric allergist whose clinical expertise spans the common atopic disorders, including asthma, allergic rhinitis, and eczema; and the diagnosis and management of food and drug allergies. This includes skin tests, blood tests and challenges for the purpose of ascertaining the presence of allergies. He is also proficient in immunotherapy, including dust mite immunotherapy for children with allergic rhinitis and immunotherapy for children with peanut allergy.

He is an active clinical researcher, with a particular focus on food allergy and immunotherapy.

On the side, he contributes articles on child health (ambulatory paediatrics as well as allergy-related topics) regularly to The Straits Times: Health. He is also a volunteer with TOUCH Family Services.

Clinical Highlights

Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis)

Signs & Symptoms

The skin affected by eczema is usually red, dry, scaly and very itchy. The front of the elbows, the back of the knees, the neck and the face are the areas that are most often affected.

What Causes it

Many factors are involved in this. There is usually a genetic element, meaning that either parent has a history of eczema, or some other allergic condition. Eczema is also affected by the environment, such as the weather, emotions, irritants and bacteria. Simply put, your child has "sensitive skin". The cells in his skin are over-reactive, and are triggered by different factors to multiply and move to the surface, where they cause the redness and itching. The skin is easily aggravated by a variety of factors including change of environmental temperature, synthetic/woollen clothes, soaps, dog and cat fur and emotional stress. Eczematous skin is more prone to developing secondary bacterial and viral infections. This condition has a genetic basis and is often associated with a family history of eczema, hayfever or asthma.

About the condition

Eczema is a chronic, itchy, dry disorder of the skin. It is also known as atopic dermatitis. It is more common in young children, and tends to get better as the child grows up.

Eczema is a fairly common problem, affecting about 10% of Singapore children. It is not contagious and can be treated. You and your child can learn how to manage it so that the skin is maintained in the best possible condition.

Diagnosis & Treatment Options

Two main areas of therapy are:

1. Moisturise, Moisturise, Moisturise. Dry skin is one of the hallmarks of eczema. When the skin is dry, it is prone to itching and cracking, which allows pollutants to enter the skin and worsen the eczema.

You should moisturise the skin as often as possible, at least two to three times per day. For bathing, use mild soaps, pat dry the skin and apply the moisturiser while the skin is still damp. Moisturisers can be applied to all parts of the body, even the face. You can use the moisturiser (such as emollients) recommended by your doctor, or any of the brands available on the market that do not contain alcohol or scents.

2. Remove triggers. Woollen clothing may irritate the skin, cotton clothing are more suitable. Detergents and harsh soaps are also irritants, as is a child's saliva. Emotion is another trigger that is difficult to control. If dust mites are a factor, your doctor may recommend using dust-mite proof bedcovers.

Other forms of Treatment

Your doctor may sometimes prescribe other medicines. Steroid creams are generally safe and very effective in clearing eczema. They should only be used as prescribed by the doctor, as prolonged use may thin the skin.

Doctors also sometimes prescribe topical or oral antibiotics to kill skin bacteria. Oral anti-itch medicines are often used to decrease the itch and help your child sleep at night.





GP Liaison Centre (GPLC)

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Specialist in Focus



Dr Michael Lim

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Dr Michael Lim is a Consultant at the Division of Paediatric Pulmonology and Sleep, Department of Paediatrics, National University Hospital Singapore.

Dr Lim's clinical areas of interest are in all aspects of paediatric respiratory and sleep medicine, and sees children with conditions such as asthma, acute respiratory illnesses, chronic diseases of the lung in childhood, congenital lung and airway disorders and sleep-disorders in childhood. His clinical service also includes the provision of a full diagnostics sleep laboratory service, as well as a comprehensive lung function laboratory service at National University Hospital Singapore. Dr Lim works to provide multidisciplinary care with his colleagues for children with neuromuscular diseases and aero-digestive problems. Dr Lim is also a trained paediatric bronchoscopist, and is a trainer in the Division's hands-on workshops in paediatric flexible bronchoscopy for the Asia-Pacific region.

Dr Lim's research interests include paediatric sleep medicine and chronic respiratory disease. He has published in the fields of paediatric respiratory, critical care, and paediatric sleep medicine.

Clinical Updates

Asthma

About the condition

Asthma is a chronic (long term) disease of the lower airways in the lungs.

The most important feature of asthma is the increased sensitivity of the airways to many factors in the environment.

These, though variable from patient to patient, include allergens (e.g. house dust mites, pollen, pets), pollution and viral infection of the airways (such as common colds).

The major consequence of the hypersensitivity of the airways is that they become swollen and narrowed. This is described as inflammation.

Asthma is therefore considered to be a condition of chronic inflammation of the airways induced and maintained by different environmental triggers.

This inflammation and swelling reduces the amount of air that can pass through the airways, making breathing difficult and noisy (wheezing).

Asthma can appear at any age. However the trigger factors can vary according to age. In young children (under the age of 3 years), asthma is usually triggered or induced by viral infection, while in older children, allergy becomes a more important trigger for asthma.

Signs & Symptoms

Symptoms of asthma can appear suddenly (attacks) or be chronically present (persistent). Symptoms include cough (especially chronic cough and dry cough at night or after exercise), wheeze (whistling noise in the chest), shortness of breath and tightness of chest.

The most typical presentation of asthma is the so-called asthma attack during which the child experience sudden wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath.

These attacks can be mild or severe, and may need emergency treatment.

What Causes It

Triggers can cause an asthma attack or make your asthma worse. Controlling your asthma involves recognizing your own triggers. Allergy tests can help in identifying these triggers. Work towards avoiding or controlling these triggers.

The common triggers include:

1. Infections - especially upper respirator tract infections (colds or flu)
2. Dust and dust mite allergens
3. Pollen
4. Animal dander (dogs, cats and birds)
5. Cold air (however, most children can sleep in air-conditioned rooms without any problems)
6. Weather changes, including the haze
7. Cigarette smoke
8. Exercise (all children with asthmas should exercise as it is good for their general health and for their asthma. However, if the asthma is not well-controlled, they may not be able to exercise and will need to see their doctor for further treatment. Children who have Exercise-Induced Asthma (EIA) can still exercise with proper medications).

Food (including cold drinks, ice-cream and chocolates) are usually NOT asthma triggers.



Shaping Medicine for the Future

CME Registration: <https://nuhcme.com.sg/>

News Updates

The 10th Asian
Cardiothoracic Surgery
Specialty Update Course 2015
7 – 11 December 2015 | Singapore

The National University Heart Centre, Singapore welcomes you to the **10th Asian Cardiothoracic Surgery Specialty Update Course on 7 - 11 December 2015.**

Organised jointly with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the course this year will focus on Hands-On Workshops on crucial areas in cardiac and thoracic surgery. Practical aspects useful to surgeons and allied health professionals in the areas will be emphasised.

The Skills Sessions and Workshops will be of great educational value. We will conduct a wetlab training workshop on cardiac valve repair and aortic root enlargement procedure, workshops on Thoracic Trauma, Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery, Video-Assisted Thoracic Surgery, Endoscopic Vein Harvesting and Aortic Surgery Workshop.

Geared towards all professionals involved in the multidisciplinary environment of Cardiothoracic Surgery, this exciting course will provide opportunities to discuss contentious subjects, in an approachable and engaging environment. Our goal is to provide a course that is both educationally enlightening and socially entertaining.

We encourage cardiothoracic & vascular surgeons, cardiothoracic anaesthesiologists and intensivists, interventional radiologists, perfusionists, nurses, researchers and other allied health professionals to participate in this learning experience.

More patients can be treated at Dental Centre opening in 2019

A dental centre that can treat 500 patients a day, up from the 350 at its current premises at National University Hospital, will open in 2019 at Kent Ridge.

The centre will then expand its scope from just private patients now, to include subsidised patients. It will focus on complicated cases, such as treatment for transplant patients, or those suffering from heart diseases or cancers. Such patients might need to be warded or require blood transfusion, said dental dean, Associate Professor Grace Ong.

Another area of focus will be dental care for the elderly, given that one in four people in Singapore will be aged 65 years or older by 2030.

Prof Ong said the Dental Faculty, which will occupy three-quarters of the new building, will be ramping up the teaching of gerodontology to prepare its students to care for Singapore's ageing population. She said that with proper care, people can keep their full set of teeth until they die, no matter how long they live. She added that dental care is particularly important for the frail elderly and those with weak immune systems, as bacteria build-up in the mouth could migrate to their lungs, causing pneumonia.

Health Minister Gan Kim Yong said at the ground-breaking ceremony of the National University Centre for Oral Health yesterday: "For the elderly, poor oral health can significantly affect their eating, possibly leading to malnutrition and other complications."



"Patients with uncontrolled diabetes tend to have more severe and rapid progression of gum disease."

He said that conversely, controlling gum disease contributes to better diabetic control, generally improving their health. The new centre will also house the clinical training facilities for Nanyang Polytechnic students taking the Diploma in Oral Health. Prof Ong said: "This will provide excellent opportunities for dental undergraduates and trainee oral health therapists to engage in collaborative learning and prepare them to work effectively as an oral healthcare team when they graduate." She added that the faculty will exploit technology to better support interactive, independent and on-demand learning for its undergraduates. Mr Gan said that with the expanded facilities, the school will be able to take in more students, from 54 a year now to 80 a year by 2021. The faculty has trained more than 2,000 dentists to date. Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, chairman of the National University Health System and president of the National University of Singapore, said the centre is designed to "cater to as yet unmet needs", such as for elderly patients, those with mobility problems or those who have special needs.

He added: "It will clearly cater to the growing demand in specialty areas such as the oral healthcare of patients with complex medical conditions, or the elderly who may have multiple chronic illnesses." He also revealed that the new centre will facilitate research in a number of key areas, such as finding new ways to repair and regenerate soft tissue and bone.

Source : *The Straits Times* (21 Sep 2015)

Upcoming CME Events

| Date | Topic |
|----------|---|
| 17 Oct * | Advances in Urology – An update for General Practitioners |
| 24 Oct | NUH Gastroenterology & Hepatology Updates for GP |

*Event Venue : Orchard Ballroom 2, Orchard Hotel

Registration & Lunch will start at 1pm

Event Venue:
NUHS Tower Block, Auditorium, Level 1
1E Kent Ridge Road, Singapore 119228

For registration please visit our CME Portal at <https://nuhcme.com.sg/>, or email us at gp@nuhs.edu.sg