

Eczema



I CAN!
The Children's Asthma and Allergy Network

What is eczema?

Eczema is a group of chronic skin diseases manifesting as chronic “angry” skin (skin inflammation), making the skin itchy, dry and covered with red patches (sometimes the patches contain crusts, sometimes the patches are oozing). Eczema in which allergy is involved is called atopic dermatitis. Allergy is involved in about 80% of eczema, making atopic dermatitis the most common type of eczema. The affected skin areas differ with age but it is the fold areas (elbows, knees, wrists, ankles and neck) that are most often affected. Eczema, including atopic dermatitis, is more common in young children and often improves with age.

How common is it?

Eczema is a common chronic skin disease that affects about 20% to 25% of children in Singapore.

How is eczema treated?

The three cornerstones of treatment are:

1. Avoidance of known triggers,
2. Keeping the skin clean and smooth (keep the skin germs low and create an artificial skin barrier with moisturiser),
and
3. Treating all active (red) eczema patches.

These can be achieved by using the following 5 types of treatment:

- **Moisturising**

Keeping the skin smooth will decrease the itch and prevent airborne allergens from entering the skin and worsening the eczema. Moisturising should be done many times per day, mainly after contact with water (bath, shower or pool) which is drying to the skin. Moisturisers can be applied to all parts of the body, even the face. You can use the moisturiser recommended by your child’s doctor or any brands available in the market that does not contain alcohol or scents. Be sure that the moisturiser does not irritate the skin and that your child likes it. Do not use moisturisers based on nut extracts such as peanut, coconut or sesame.

- **Removal of triggers**

As woollen materials and clothing of synthetic materials may irritate the skin, it is more suitable for your child to wear cotton clothing. Detergents and harsh soaps are irritants, and so is a child's saliva. If house dust mites are an aggravating factor, your child's doctor may recommend methods to reduce the house dust mites in your home or to encourage your child to adopt an active outdoor lifestyle. In very young children, food allergy may be involved. Food can be airborne and can trigger eczema through direct contact. Please consult your child's doctor for a thorough evaluation if this is suspected.

- **Anti-inflammatory topical medication**

Doctors may prescribe other medications to reduce inflammation on the skin. Steroid creams are generally safe and very effective in clearing eczema. They should only be used as prescribed by the doctor.

- **Anti-itch medication**

Doctors may also prescribe topical or oral anti-itch medications to decrease the itch and help your child sleep at night. As scratching is an aggravating factor in eczema, reducing the itch is an important part of treatment. Remember that adequate moisturising also helps reduce itch.

- **Anti-bacterial medication**

Some bacterial antigens may trigger and aggravate the eczema. Doctors may prescribe antiseptics, even topical or oral antibiotics, to be part of the anti-eczema treatment.

I've done everything, but...

Don't give up!

With the above measures, most eczema can be controlled most of the time. However, some children may experience flare-ups despite following the guidelines. It is important not to give up, to be patient and continue the treatment, especially through skin care (keep the skin clean and smooth). Talk to your child's doctor, discuss a plan and follow the advice. Eczema cannot be cured, only controlled, which allows some children to outgrow it. After each acute flare-up, the trigger will usually go away and the symptoms will subside. Consult your child's doctor if you have any worries or questions.

Action plan for eczema

Maintenance Treatment

Moisturise with _____ at least _____ times per day.

Mild Flare

1. Use _____ (brand of choice) for shower.
2. Disinfect using topical antiseptic _____ before moisturising.
3. Apply _____ (topical steroid) _____ times daily.
4. Moisturise with _____ at least _____ times daily.
5. If I cannot sleep, I can take _____

6. Other instructions: _____

Moderate Flare

1. Use _____ (brand of choice) for shower.
2. Disinfect using topical antiseptic _____ before moisturising.
3. Apply _____ (topical steroid) _____ times daily.
4. Moisturise with _____ at least _____ times daily.
5. If the skin is infected, your doctor may prescribe antibiotics.
6. Other instructions: _____

Severe Flare (infected, extensive or with fever)

Go to the NUH 24-hour Children's Emergency immediately.

About the Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children’s Medical Institute (KTP-NUCMI)

The KTP-NUCMI is the paediatric arm of the National University Hospital and comprises the Departments of Paediatrics, Paediatric Surgery and Neonatology. We provide comprehensive and specialised medical and surgical services for newborns, children and adolescents, and are the only public hospital in Singapore that offers paediatric kidney and liver transplant programmes. Through a generous gift from the Estate of Khoo Teck Puat, we have set up an integrated outpatient facility with medical, diagnostic and rehabilitation services.

For more information about us, visit www.nuh.com.sg/nuhkids.

Contact Us

24-hour Children’s Emergency

Location: NUH Main Building, Zone F, Level 1
General Enquiry: +65 6772 2555

KTP-NUCMI

Location: NUH Main Building, Zone E, Level 2 (Accessible via Kent Ridge Wing, Zone C, Level 2, Lift Lobby C)
Operating Hours: 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri), 8.30am – 12.30pm (Sat)
General Enquiry: +65 6772 5736 Appointment Line: +65 6772 2002
Fax: +65 6776 2102 Email: ktpnucmi_appt@nuhs.edu.sg

9a Viva-University Children’s Cancer Centre

Location: NUH Medical Centre, Zone B, Level 9
Operating Hours: 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri) Appointment Line: +65 6772 5030
Fax: +65 6872 4314 Email: cbccappt@nuhs.edu.sg

NUH Children’s Urgent Care Clinic @ Bukit Panjang

Location: Junction 10, 1 Woodlands Road, #01-22, Singapore 677899
Operating Hours: 9am – 11pm daily (including public holidays)
General Enquiry: +65 6219 1538 Email: childreucc@nuhs.edu.sg
Website: www.nuh.com.sg/ucc

NUH Child Development Unit @ JMC

Location: Jurong Medical Centre, 60 Jurong West Central 3, Level 2, Singapore 648346
Operating Hours: 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri) Appointment Line: +65 6665 2530/2531
Fax: +65 6665 0158 Email: cdu@nuhs.edu.sg
Website: www.nuh.com.sg/cdu

NUH Child Development Unit @ Keat Hong

Location: Keat Hong Community Club, 2 Choa Chu Kang Loop, #03-01, Singapore 689687
Operating Hours: 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri) Appointment Line: +65 6769 4537/4637
Fax: +65 6665 0158 Email: cdu@nuhs.edu.sg
Website: www.nuh.com.sg/cdu

National University Hospital

Location: 5 Lower Kent Ridge Road, Singapore 119074
Tel: +65 6779 5555 Email: NUH_enquiries@nuhs.edu.sg
Website: www.nuh.com.sg



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