

Nine Ways to Take the Itch out of Eczema

Eczema is a general term for many inflamed skin conditions. It is used in this health hint for atopic dermatitis, one of the most common types of eczema. This usually affects children, but can occur at any age. It tends to run in families and is more common in persons who have asthma or allergies. Symptoms of eczema are patches of skin that are dry, red, and very itchy. Scratching the skin causes the rash. Eczema usually appears on the face, neck, and the creases of the ankles, elbows, knees, and wrists. In some persons, the skin swells and has blisters, which may ooze and crust over.

Irritants and allergens that trigger the itching for persons with eczema include:

1. •Contact with wool, other rough fabrics, or permanent press fabrics.
2. •Contact with certain cosmetics, perfumes, soaps, cleaning products and other irritants.
3. •Sweating or feeling too hot.
4. •Exposure to high heat and humidity; cigarette smoke; dust; mold; pollen; and animal dander.
5. •Eating foods, such as eggs, milk, seafood, or wheat products.
6. •Stress can worsen a flare-up.

Eczema is quite unpredictable. Usually, it's at its worst in childhood and gradually lets up as you get older. Sometimes it goes away for good. Still, eczema can be a lifetime problem and although you can't cure it, you can manage it. Here's how:

1. •Bathe less often (perhaps sponge bathing in between tub baths) and add oil to the bath water. Or take quick showers.
2. •Use warm (not hot) water when bathing or showering.
3. •Use a mild soap or no soap at all on the areas of eczema.
4. •Avoid contact with wool and other rough clothing or blankets.
5. •After bathing or washing your skin, apply a light, nongreasy, unscented lotion that does not contain alcohol.
6. •Don't overdress or promote perspiration in any way.
7. •Wear rubber gloves dusted on the inside with talcum powder or cornstarch when doing household chores. Or try cotton-lined latex gloves.
8. •Avoid any foods, chemicals, cosmetics, or other allergens that worsen the condition.
9. •And above all, don't scratch! Scratching eczema only makes it worse. You'll break the skin allowing bacteria to infect the skin. (If that happens, consult a doctor.) So hands off!