



ECZEMA (ATOPIC DERMATITIS)

Understanding **Atopic Eczema** (also known as atopic dermatitis) is a chronic inflammatory skin condition that causes the skin to become itchy, dry, and cracked. It is most common in children but can affect adults as well. Eczema is not a single disease, but an umbrella term for a group of inflammatory skin conditions that cause dry, irritated, and intensely itchy patches. At its core, eczema happens because the skin's outer protective shield—the **skin barrier**—becomes compromised, allowing crucial moisture to escape and environmental irritants to get in.

Common Types of Eczema

- **Atopic Dermatitis:** The most common and chronic form. It frequently begins in childhood and is closely linked to genetics, asthma, and seasonal allergies.
 - **Contact Dermatitis:** Occurs when the skin reacts directly to a specific substance. It can be an **irritant** (like harsh soaps or chemicals) or an **allergen** (like nickel, fragrances, or poison ivy).
 - **Dyshidrotic Eczema:** Characterized by tiny, intensely itchy blisters that typically develop on the edges of the fingers, palms of the hands, and soles of the feet.
 - **Seborrheic Dermatitis:** Frequently appears on areas with many oil glands, such as the scalp (causing severe dandruff or cradle cap), eyebrows, and sides of the nose.
 - **Nummular Eczema:** Distinctive, coin-shaped or oval crusty spots that often develop after a skin injury like a bug bite or burn, typically on the legs or arms.
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Common Symptoms

- **Intense Itching:** Often worsens at night and can lead to sleep disruption.
- **Dry, Sensitive Skin:** Skin may feel tight or rough.
- **Red to Brownish-Gray Patches:** Frequently appears on the hands, feet, ankles, wrists, neck, upper chest, and inside the bend of the elbows and knees.
- **Small, Raised Bumps:** These may leak fluid and crust over if scratched.
- **Thickened, Cracked, or Scaly Skin:** Often a result of long-term scratching.

Managing Triggers

Identifying and avoiding triggers is a key part of long-term management. Common irritants include:

- **Irritants:** Harsh soaps, detergents, perfumes, and certain fabrics like wool or synthetic fibers.
- **Environment:** Extremely hot or cold weather, high or low humidity, and cigarette smoke.
- **Allergens:** Dust mites, pet dander, pollen, or mold.
- **Stress:** While not a direct cause, emotional stress can trigger a flare-up.

Treatment Options

Medical treatments focus on reducing inflammation, calming the itch, and healing the skin barrier. Depending on severity, a doctor may recommend:

- **Topical Corticosteroids:** Creams or ointments applied directly to flares to quickly calm inflammation and redness.
- **Topical Calcineurin Inhibitors (TCIs):** Non-steroidal prescription creams (like tacrolimus or pimecrolimus) that help control the immune response without thinning the skin, making them useful for sensitive areas like the face or eyelids.
- **Oral Medications & Biologics:** For severe, widespread cases, targeted systemic therapies (like injectable biologics or oral immunosuppressants) work from inside the body to block the specific proteins causing the inflammation.

Daily Care & Treatment

Effective management focuses on **"trapping"** moisture in the skin and reducing inflammation, because eczema is often ongoing, a consistent daily skincare routine is the absolute foundation of keeping flares at bay.

Strategy	Action
Moisturizing	Lock in moisture immediately: The. Apply a thick, fragrance-free emollient (creams or ointments are far more effective than thin lotions) over the entire body to seal in the moisture from your bath and rebuild the skin barrier.

Bathing	Take a short, lukewarm bath or shower: 5–10 minutes daily. Avoid hot water, which strips natural lipids from the skin. Use a gentle, fragrance-free, non-soap cleanser only where needed (like underarms and groin).
Topical Treatments	Apply medicated treatments first: To active flare areas. If you have prescription topical medications, apply them directly to the irritated or red patches while the skin is still damp.
Gentle Drying	Pat dry gently: Immediately post-bath. Do not rub or scrub the skin with a towel. Gently pat with a soft towel, leaving the skin slightly damp to maximize hydration.

Key Trigger Management: Beyond skincare, managing external triggers is vital. Opt for 100% cotton clothing, use hypoallergenic and fragrance-free laundry detergents, and keep indoor humidity stable to prevent the skin from drying out.

Let's Help You Get “Clare” Skin

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