

## **Atopic Dermatitis (AD), or Eczema**

AD is a skin condition characterized by dry scaly skin and intense itching. The skin also may become thickened from long term scratching and rubbing. AD falls into a category of diseases called atopic. AD was included in the atopic category because it often affects people who either suffer from asthma and/or hay fever or who have family members who have these conditions. The tendency for atopic diseases such as AD are inherited from one's parents. AD almost always begins in childhood, usually during infancy. It tends to improve and worsen periodically. During flares, open weeping or crusted sores may develop from scratching and/or from infection.



### **How can one prevent flares of AD?**

1. Use lukewarm water. Hot showers strip the natural oils from your skin and trigger itch. Use only gentle cleansers such as Dove, Oil of Olay, Cetaphil, Basis, Aveeno, CeraVe and Neutrogena. Sensitive skin formulas are recommended.
2. Apply a moisturizer to your skin within three minutes after bathing. Cetaphil cream, Eucerin, Advanced Therapy Lubriderm, Moisturel, Aquaphor, CeraVe, Acid Mantle and Cutemol Cream are often recommended and should be applied once or twice daily.
3. Trim fingernails.
4. Avoid activities causing excessive sweating.
5. Dress in clothes that “breathe” – 100% cotton or soft fabrics.
6. Avoid wools, nylon or harsh fabrics.
7. Avoid bleach or fabric softeners that can leave a residue on clothing. Use an extra rinse cycle.
8. Use a humidifier to increase the amount of water in your home. A setting between 35 – 40 degrees is ideal. Keep the thermostat low in your home.

### **Avoidance of Triggers**

1. Minimize exposure to irritants and allergens that may trigger AD.
2. As many as 3 of every 10 children with AD suffer from food allergies, especially in children less than 2 years old. Since an allergic reaction to food can trigger a flare-up of AD, it is important to identify the foods.
3. Skin testing is recommended to determine if foods or environmental factors are triggering frequent flares.

## Atopic Dermatitis (AD), or Eczema (Cont'd)

### Treatment Options

1. **Topical steroids** may be necessary if the skin becomes inflamed. There are various types of steroid medicines. There are seven groups of steroids. Group I is the strongest and Group VII is the mildest. In general, the mildest steroids that is effective should be used. Ointments are greasier than creams and penetrate the skin more easily possibly making them effective. Side effects from steroids are more likely to occur if higher potency steroids are used, especially long term. Side effects may include thinning of the skin, stretch marks or spider veins, especially on the face.
2. **Non-steroid options** are available. They are anti-inflammatory medications that can relieve itching and redness. They can be used for short or long periods as needed. These medications are tacrolimus (**Protopic**) and pimecrolimus (**Elidel**). The possible side effects are burning or a feeling of warmth at the site of application.
3. Another non-steroidal option is EpiCeram. It promotes healing of the skin.
3. **Antibiotics** may be necessary if there is evidence of a skin infection.
4. **Antihistamines** may help control the itchiness associated with AD.