



# Kiwi Pediatrics

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## What is Eczema?

Atopic dermatitis is a chronic (long-lasting) skin condition that comes in many forms. Some children may have very mild eczema, while others may have a severe form. Sometimes, as children with eczema grow older, their symptoms lessen or disappear altogether. Other children may have eczema for life.

With eczema, the skin becomes dry, very itchy and a rash may appear. There are times when the condition is worse and times when the condition is better. When the condition worsens, this is called a flare-up. Flare-ups often occur in the winter months when the air is drier, but they can happen any time throughout the year.

The causes of eczema are unclear. Both genetic and environmental factors likely play a part. Children who have eczema may also have asthma or allergies such as hay fever.

There is no cure for eczema, but your health-care team will work with you to develop a plan to control the symptoms.

## How to manage eczema?

Good skin care, including bathing and moisturizing, is a key part of managing your child's eczema.

It is also sometimes possible to figure out what factors cause eczema in your child. If you know the triggers of your child's eczema, help your child

stay away from them. However, many flare-ups happen without an obvious trigger.

Your child's health care provider may also prescribe one or more medicines to help your child. These medicines may be topical (applied to the skin) or oral (to be taken by mouth). Sometimes a patch of eczema can become infected and require treatment with an antibiotic.

## Eliminate Triggers

Eliminating triggers may help to reduce flares of eczema. Common ways to eliminate triggers are listed below but your child may have their own specific trigger that needs to be addressed.

Wear 100% cotton clothes. Avoid wool and other rough fabrics.  
Wash clothes with mild, unscented detergent. Avoid fabric softener and dryer sheets.

Avoid excessive heat and sweating.

Avoid cold, dry air. Consider a humidifier in the winter.

Keep bare skin off the grass if that tends to worsen the eczema.

Consider purchasing a home water softener

## Moisturizing

Dry skin is one of the most common features of eczema. When skin is dry, it can be itchy. It also starts to lose its function as a protective barrier. This means that more water is lost from the skin and irritants can get into the skin. Both can trigger an eczema flare-up.

Moisturizers help decrease the itch and soothe the skin. They do this by creating a protective layer over the skin. This helps keep the water in the skin and the irritants out. Moisturizers are a mixture of fats, oils and water. There are three kinds of moisturizers that are used: ointments, creams and lotions.

Applying a moisturizer multiple times per day even when the skin looks clear can help reduce itchiness and the frequency of flare ups.

## Bathing

Regular bathing is safe and appropriate for children with eczema. Avoid using soap or bubble baths and instead use a gentle cleaner. Bath water should be luke warm and time in the bath limited to less than 10 minutes. After bathing, pat dry the skin and apply a moisturizer to help seal in water and keep the skin hydrated.

