



INNOVATIVE
DERMATOLOGY

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Eczema

What Is Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis)?

Eczema, also called **atopic dermatitis**, is a common, long-term inflammatory skin condition that causes **dry, itchy, sensitive skin** and sometimes **red, rough, or scaly patches**. It tends to flare and improve over time (a “relapsing” pattern).

Eczema is **not contagious**—you cannot “catch” it from someone else.



What Does Eczema Look Like?

Eczema can look different by age, skin tone, and body location. Common features include:

- **Itching** (sometimes intense)
- **Dryness** and rough texture
- Redness or darker/lighter discoloration (varies by skin tone)
- **Scaling**, cracking, or thickened skin from chronic rubbing/scratching
- Sometimes **oozing/crusting** during flares

Common locations:

- **Children:** cheeks, arms/legs, skin folds
 - **Adults:** hands, wrists, eyelids, neck, skin folds; can be widespread
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Why Eczema Happens

Eczema is often related to a combination of:

- **Skin barrier weakness** (skin loses moisture easily and becomes sensitive)
 - **Immune system inflammation**
 - **Genetics** and a tendency toward allergies/asthma in some families
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Common Triggers

Many people notice flares with:

- Dry/cold weather
- Heat, sweating
- Fragrances or harsh soaps
- Frequent handwashing / sanitizers (hand eczema)
- Stress, illness
- Certain fabrics (wool) or detergents

Identifying triggers helps reduce flare frequency.

How We Diagnose Eczema

Diagnosis is usually based on:

- Your history (itch pattern, triggers, family history)
 - Skin exam
 - In some cases: **patch testing** (if allergic contact dermatitis is suspected) or a **skin biopsy** if the diagnosis is unclear
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Treatment Options

Your plan depends on severity, location, age, and flare pattern.

1) Daily Skin Barrier Care (Foundation of Treatment)

- Gentle, fragrance-free cleanser
- Short, lukewarm showers
- **Moisturize at least 1–2 times daily** (especially after bathing)

2) Prescription Topical Medications (Flares)

- Anti-inflammatory creams/ointments to calm itching and redness
- Steroid-sparing options for sensitive areas (face/eyelids/skin folds) when appropriate

3) Treatments for Moderate-to-Severe Eczema

If eczema is widespread, frequently flaring, or affecting sleep and quality of life, options may include:

- **Phototherapy (light therapy)**
- Oral or injectable anti-inflammatory medications (selected patients)
- Targeted therapies when appropriate (your dermatologist will guide what's safest for you)

4) Treating Infection (When Present)

Eczema skin can be more prone to infection. If we suspect infection, we may recommend specific treatments and updated skin-care steps.

Pre-Op Instructions (Before Your Eczema Visit or Procedure)

(Most eczema care is not “surgery,” but these tips help you get the best results.)

Before your evaluation

- Bring a list of current products (soap, shampoo, moisturizer, “natural” products)
- Note what triggers flares and where it occurs
- Tell us if you have asthma, allergies, or frequent skin infections

If you’re scheduled for patch testing

- Ask us which medications to avoid beforehand (some can interfere with results)
- Avoid applying creams to the test area as instructed

If phototherapy is scheduled

- Avoid tanning/sunburn before sessions
 - Tell us about any **sun-sensitizing medications**
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Post-Op Instructions (After Starting Treatment)

After starting prescription creams

- Use exactly as directed (overuse and underuse can both cause problems)
- Expect improvement over **days to weeks**, depending on severity
- Continue moisturizer daily even when the flare improves

After phototherapy (if used)

- Mild pinkness can happen
- Moisturize daily
- Avoid extra sun exposure the same day unless your dermatologist advises otherwise

Call our office promptly if you notice

- Rapidly worsening redness, pain, warmth, swelling, or pus
 - Fever, chills, or feeling unwell
 - Painful clusters of blisters (especially on the face)—this needs urgent evaluation
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Eczema / Atopic Dermatitis FAQ

Is eczema the same as dry skin?

Dry skin can be part of eczema, but eczema also includes **inflammation and itch** and often needs targeted treatment during flares.

Is eczema contagious?

No—eczema is not contagious.

Why does eczema itch so much?

Eczema affects the skin barrier and triggers inflammation that makes the skin **extra sensitive and itchy**. Scratching can worsen the barrier and keep the itch cycle going.

Can eczema happen on the hands only?

Yes—**hand eczema** is common and may be triggered by frequent washing, sanitizers, or irritants at work or home.

What's the best moisturizer for eczema?

In general, choose **fragrance-free, thick creams or ointments**. We can recommend options based on whether your eczema is on the face, body, or hands.

Do I need allergy testing for eczema?

Not always. If we suspect your rash is being driven by an **allergic contact trigger** (like fragrances, preservatives, metals, or topical products), **patch testing** may help.

Can diet cause eczema?

Some people notice food-related flares, especially children, but it's not the main driver for most patients. We focus on evidence-based steps and only recommend dietary changes when clearly appropriate.

When should I see a dermatologist?

If eczema is affecting sleep, spreading, frequently infected, not improving with OTC care, or causing significant discomfort—professional care can make a big difference.