Eczema

What is eczema?

Eczema is a skin problem where the skin can get dry and itchy.

- It is also called atopic dermatitis.
- It weakens the top layer of the skin. This causes redness and swelling.
- This happens on different areas of skin at different times. These areas are called rashes.
- Many children who have eczema may also have allergies or asthma, but allergies do not cause eczema.

What is the treatment?

The goal is to make the top layer of skin stronger with creams, ointments, medicines or special care. This helps to stop the itching, redness and swelling. Some treatment guidelines are listed below. Talk with the doctor about what is best for your child.

Soak and seal

- **Soak** the skin in water for at least 10 to 15 minutes every day. Your child can do this by taking a bath or shower.
- Use gentle, fragrance-free (no smell) soaps and shampoos. Rinse them all the way off the skin with water.
- Pat the skin dry. Keep the skin a little damp and moist.
- **Seal** in the moisture. Do this by putting a thick cream or greasy ointment on your child's skin. You can use any of these:
  - CeraVe cream
  - Vaseline
  - Aquaphor
  - Eucerin

Skin medicine

- Your child's doctor may prescribe a type of steroid medicine that goes on the skin. This is called a topical corticosteroid.
- Use the medicine as advised by the doctor. Most often, a thin layer of medicine is put on the rash up to 2 times each day. This could be 1 time in the morning and 1 time at night.
- Only put the medicine on the rash, not on normal looking skin. This helps to prevent problems called side effects.
- Put the medicine on the rash. Then put on a cream or greasy ointment on normal skin.
- Talk with the doctor about what medicine to put on sensitive areas such as your child's face, underarms or anywhere near private parts.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Antihistamines

- Your child may have trouble sleeping when they feel itchy. The doctor may prescribe diphenhydramine (Benadryl) or hydroxyzine (Atarax) if this happens. These are called antihistamines.
- These medicines may help them sleep, so your child does not scratch. They will not stop your child from feeling itchy.

Wet wraps

- Your child's eczema may get worse at times. They may have more rashes than normal.
- Your child's doctor's may advise for wet wraps when this happens. This can help with pain and itching.
- To do this:
  - Have your child take a bath or shower. Pat the skin dry.
  - Only if prescribed, put the steroid medicine on your child's rashes.
  - Put a thick cream on the normal skin.
  - Put cotton pajamas under warm water. Squeeze out the water until they are only a little damp.
  - Help your child put on the damp pajamas.
  - Put dry pajamas on top of the damp pajamas.
  - Adjust the room temperature or use blankets to keep your child comfortable.
  - Have your child keep these on for 3 to 4 hours or while they sleep at night.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if:

- Your child's eczema is not getting better after 2 weeks of treatment.
- Your child has worsening of rash or Eczema with use of any medication or cream/ointment.
- Your child has a skin infection, which can look like yellow crusts of the skin or red painful bumps that contain yellow or white pus.
- Your child is having thinning or lightening of the skin.
- Your child is sad or depressed.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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