

# Eczema: what parents need to know



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28 July 2022, 4 min read

Health



Out of the blue, your child may develop a raised, red rash. It could be patchy or all in one area. [Atopic dermatitis](#) is one of the most common types of eczema,<sup>1</sup> which is a term for a group of conditions that cause the skin to become dry, itchy and inflamed. In severe cases, the rash develops clear fluid-filled blisters. It may also appear scaly and scratch marks are often present.<sup>2</sup>

Atopic dermatitis is a chronic, long-term condition, but it can get better or go away as

your child gets older.<sup>3</sup> It is thought to be caused by your child's immune system reacting to things that cause allergies. Children with atopic dermatitis can also have allergic asthma, hay fever or food allergies.<sup>2</sup> The good news is that atopic dermatitis is not contagious, so siblings and friends won't catch it.

## **Mom! Dad! It's so itchy!**

In the early stages, you may notice very itchy, dry skin. When your child scratches, the skin becomes red and irritated. Little blisters may appear and crust over. Constant scratching can cause tough and thick patches. Atopic dermatitis is most common on the face, scalp, neck, arms and legs. In children, it often appears in the folds of the elbows or knees.<sup>1</sup>

## **What causes atopic dermatitis?**

The cause of atopic dermatitis isn't clear, but the skin inflammation is considered a type of allergic response and is often linked to a personal or family history of allergies. Usually, your child's immune system protects against illness, but sometimes it can overreact in response to allergens. Possible triggers include:

- Allergens, such as dust mites, pollen, molds or animal dander
- Harsh soaps or detergents, rubbing the skin and wearing wool
- Fumes or chemicals
- Dry and cold weather
- A heat wave
- Stress and emotions such as frustration or embarrassment
- Certain foods such as eggs, peanuts, milk, soy or wheat products may be to blame
- Excessive washing, which can lead to drier skin

## **How is atopic dermatitis treated?**

There's no cure for atopic dermatitis, but you can help control the symptoms by avoiding your child's triggers. Atopic dermatitis is usually treated with medicines you

can apply to your child's skin (topical medicines). Gentle skin care, including moisturizer can help. If the rash doesn't improve with topical medicines, your pediatrician may prescribe pills, phototherapy (natural or artificial light therapy) or injections. Your pediatrician may also recommend allergy testing to identify triggers.

### **How can we relieve the itching?**

It can be hard for kids to resist scratching and the itchiness may keep them up at night. Here's what you can do at home to help your little one feel better:

- Wash the affected area with warm water only, no soap
- Apply a moisturizer after bathing while the skin is still damp
- Apply cold, wet cloths to reduce itching
- Avoid sun exposure
- Ask your pediatrician if an over-the-counter antihistamine might help
- Avoid known triggers

### **Make an appointment with your pediatrician today.**

Your son or daughter may experience several types of [skin rashes](#) over the course of their childhood. For atopic dermatitis, early medical treatment may keep your child's symptoms from getting worse. Your doctor will examine the rash and ask questions about your child's health to make a diagnosis. If your doctor prescribes a medication, use it consistently according to their instructions.

If you have concerns, Babylon Health is here for you 24/7. To book an appointment, [download the Babylon Health app](#).

1. National Eczema Association. "Understanding Eczema in Children."  
<https://nationaleczema.org/eczema/children/>. Accessed July 12, 2022.

2. National Eczema Association. "Atopic Dermatitis in Children."  
<https://nationaleczema.org/eczema/children/atopic-dermatitis/>. Accessed July 12, 2022.

3. Children's National. "Pediatric Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis)."

<https://childrensnational.org/visit/conditions-and-treatments/allergies-immunology/eczema-atopic-dermatitis>. Accessed July 12, 2022.

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