

Eczema Management Guide for Parents

What is eczema?

Eczema is a common skin condition seen in approximately 1 in 5 children. It causes the skin to get irritated, red, dry, bumpy, and itchy. It is also known as atopic eczema or atopic dermatitis.

Controlling and treating flares usually comes down to basic management: recognising particular triggers to avoid exposure; having a consistent, appropriate daily skincare routine with emollients to repair the barrier function of the skin and using adequate quantities of topical steroids, for a sufficient period, when the skin is inflamed

STEP 1 (Keeping the skin out of trouble)

MAINTAIN SKIN EVERY DAY - Even when the skin is clear of visible eczema

Moisturising is the most important part of eczema management. Moisturise the **whole** body and face at least **three times a day**, every day. Apply in a sweeping motion in the direction of the hair growth (down the arm/leg) and do not rub in as this could block the hair follicles and cause further irritation.

The drier the skin, the greasier the emollient needs to be. Ointments are preferred rather than a cream or lotion as they are more moisturising and less likely to sting on red or broken skin.

You should aim to use 500g (1 tub) in:-

Under 1 year old – less than 4 weeks

1-10 years old – less than 2 weeks

10 years old and over – less than a week

STEP 2 (Getting the skin out of trouble)

TOPICAL STEROIDS

Topical steroids are **safe** and effective when used correctly and are a **vital part of eczema management**. The commonest problem with topical steroids seen in specialist care is under-use and parents are usually concerned with perceived side effects such as 'thinning of the skin'. This is very rarely seen in children with eczema and is caused by prolonged over-use of strong steroids. It is very important that adequate quantities are used to treat the eczema properly. As with moisturisers, ointments are preferred in most cases as they are more effective, moisturising and less likely to sting on red or broken skin.

Topical steroids should be applied after a bath/shower using the finger-tip unit technique (see below) to cover **all eczema affected skin** and not just the worst areas **once a day**, for a minimum of 2 weeks and up to 4 weeks until the skin looks/feels 'normal'. **Do not use Eumovate to the eyelids unless specifically advised to.**

It is important to not stop the steroid as soon as the skin is better. Reduce to patches/problematic areas every other day for a week, then every third day for a week. For recurrent flares continue twice weekly application to problematic areas. Smooth the steroid onto the skin in the direction of the hair growth, **do not** rub in and allow 20-30 minutes to soak in before applying more moisturiser.



1 Fingertip Unit (FTU)

Measurement:
From tip to the first joint of the index finger.



• 1 FTU is a suitable amount to cover two palms of an adult.

• For cream, balm or ointment:
1 FTU = approx 0.5g

General information for Parents

- A short bath or shower daily (less than 10 minutes) using lukewarm water and a bath oil/soap free wash will help - avoid soaps and bubble baths.
- Keep nails short to avoid damage to the skin from scratching
- Avoid or minimise exposure to triggers and irritants where possible, such as soaps or perfumed products, overheating/overdressing – during the day or night and wet wipes (of any sort).
- Rinse the skin after chlorine or salt water exposure.
- Minimise/avoid skin contact with grass, sand, playdoh and slime.
- Post-inflammatory hypo and hyper-pigmentation (patchy pale/dark colour changes) is a common result of eczema and usually settles with time.

Useful online resources

[How to use topical steroids - YouTube - www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFkL1c0sh7I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFkL1c0sh7I)

[How to use emollients - YouTube - www.youtube.com/watch?v=nj4JSWGL5KQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nj4JSWGL5KQ)

(Video's by Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust)

The National Eczema Society - <https://eczema.org/information-and-advice/information-for-parents-and-children/children-and-eczema/>

Eczema Outreach Support - <https://www.eos.org.uk/>