

ECZEMA

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Eczema or atopic dermatitis is a skin condition that causes the skin to become dry, flaky, and itchy. It occurs in individuals of every gender, race, and age. The cause is unknown but it has been found to be more severe in individuals with environmental or food allergies. Symptoms include itchy, red, and dry patches of skin that are usually located in different places in different age groups. Babies usually get eczema on the front of their legs and arms, scalp, or cheeks. Adults tend to get the patches in the creases of their elbows, knees, and necks. It can also be found on the face, forearms, wrists, and hands. If you notice areas on your body as listed above, please follow up with your family physician to be evaluated and treated. Eczema is not a medical emergency but worsening symptoms can cause skin thickening and darkening that could be difficult to treat once advanced.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO AVOID FLARES INCLUDE:

- Keep skin soft and moisturized, especially after washing
- Avoid hot showers and baths
- Avoid harsh soaps, scented lotions, and perfumes
- Avoid wearing clothing with wool or synthetic fabrics
- Avoid exposure to dry heat or air, which can dry out the skin
- Avoid places with extreme temperature changes
- Try to avoid scratching affected skin areas because symptoms can worsen

MEDICAL CARE & TREATMENT OPTIONS:

Diagnosis is based on symptoms and physical exam. There is no perfect test that confirms eczema. Eczema has no cure and treatments are used to relieve symptoms. Treatments include creams and ointments that moisturize the skin. Medications such as steroids can reduce redness and inflammation while antihistamines can help to relieve itching. Light therapy can reduce symptoms in severe cases not fully treated with creams. Certain foods can act as triggers in some individuals including milk, soy, eggs, nuts and processed foods. Discuss with your physician whether avoidance of these foods might be beneficial to you.

SOURCE(S): American Academy of Dermatology, American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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