

# Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis) Fast Facts



Visit [www.allergy.org.au/patients/skin-allergy](http://www.allergy.org.au/patients/skin-allergy) for free resources about eczema (atopic dermatitis) and other skin conditions, including hives (urticaria), angioedema and contact dermatitis.

  
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# Fast Facts

## Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis)

- 1** Eczema (also called atopic dermatitis) affects the skin, causing redness, itching and sometimes infections. When eczema worsens this is called an eczema flare. Usually there is no single trigger for an eczema flare.
- 2** In people with eczema the skin does not retain moisture very well, which causes it to dry out easily. This makes the skin more open to allergens and irritants. These can trigger the skin to release chemicals that make the skin itchy. Scratching itchy skin causes more chemicals to be released, making the skin feel itchier. This “scratch and itch” cycle can cause discomfort, disrupt sleep and affect quality of life.
- 3** Eczema is a chronic health problem that affects many people of all ages, but is most common in infants:
  - Infantile eczema occurs in around 20% of children under two years of age and usually improves by the age of five.
  - Childhood eczema may follow or start from two to four years of age. Rashes and dryness are usually in elbow creases, behind the knees, across ankles, or on the face, ears and neck.
  - Adult eczema symptoms also occur in these areas and can cause rough, hard and thickened skin.
- 4** Many people with eczema already have other allergies or can develop other allergies, such as allergic rhinitis (hay fever), asthma, food allergy or dust mite allergy.
- 5** Studies show that infants with eczema and a family history of allergy are more likely to develop food allergy. Managing eczema well in infants may reduce the chance of children developing food allergy.
- 6** Eczema can be well managed, and the following steps may be used as a guide:
  - Maintain skin every day by applying moisturiser twice a day to the face and body.
  - Avoid triggers and irritants such as allergens, soap, perfumes, overheating and exposure to prickly fabrics.
  - Treat eczema flares or severe eczema by applying creams or ointments as soon as there is an eczema flare. If prescribed, use immune modulating treatments for severe eczema.
  - Prevent and treat infections using prescribed treatments as directed.
  - It is important to see your doctor if eczema does not improve within a week or if you are unwell with a fever.

**More information:** [www.allergy.org.au/patients/skin-allergy](http://www.allergy.org.au/patients/skin-allergy)  
[www.preventallergies.org.au/eczema](http://www.preventallergies.org.au/eczema)

**Other Fast Facts:** [www.allergy.org.au/patients/fast-facts](http://www.allergy.org.au/patients/fast-facts)

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