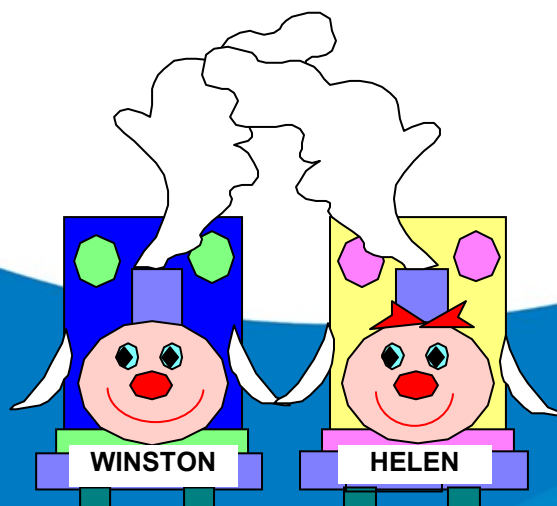


# Eczema

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## The nature of the condition

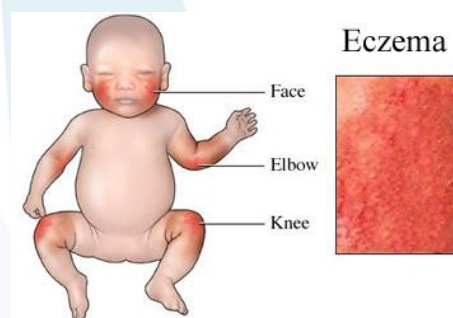
Eczema describes a number of skin conditions where the skin is red, sore and intensely itchy.

It is usually hereditary, although some external factors can make it worse, such as allergy to house dust mite, dog, cat dander, grass pollen; and certain foods can also cause 'flare ups'.

Particular foods include eggs, cow's milk, peanuts and fish. The pattern of allergic reactions may alter as the child gets older.

Eczema is very common in children; it affects approximately 1 in 10. Often there is someone else in the family with eczema, asthma or hay fever. There are also common places on the body where the eczema seems to be worse, e.g. in the skin creases and on the face and scalp.

It often becomes infected when it becomes very dry and there are broken areas, which allow bacteria to infect the skin.



## Our usual form of treatment

There is no single medication which will cure eczema. However, for most children it is possible to treat eczema effectively. Avoidance of known triggers will minimise 'flare ups'.

### Emollients

These are products, which moisturise and soften the skin. They restore the elasticity and suppleness of the skin and help reduce the itching and scratching. Emollients are safe and should be used frequently as first line treatment. These should include:

- ◆ A bath oil, such as Oilatum with regular baths once or twice a day
- ◆ A soap substitute, such as aqueous cream
- ◆ A moisturiser applied liberally to all areas of dry skin, at least twice daily, and if possible more frequently e.g. Emulsifying ointment.

### Steroid creams

The use of a steroid cream is a safe and essential part of treatment. Initially this should be applied daily or as directed by your doctor; specifically to the areas of inflammation that are red or pink areas. The weakest steroid cream necessary should be used. A mild topical steroid, such as 1% hydrocortisone, is usually sufficient for most children. Occasionally, a stronger steroid cream may be needed for more severe eczema. Your doctor will advise you on the best cream for your child.

## Antihistamines

Antihistamines are very important as they take the itch and the scratch out of the eczema.

Antihistamines such as Piriton should be used at bedtime, as it will help the child to sleep. If the eczema is more severe and antihistamines are required during the day, other non-sleepy preparations should be used, such as Loratidine, Cetirizine or Hydroxyzine.

## Eczema Treatment Plan

Many families with eczema get confused with the number of different preparations they are prescribed – what should be used where, how much and how often? This is a guide to help explain how you should use the various treatments your doctor has recommended. Remember, not treating your child as directed may cause the eczema to become worse and possibly infected.

Your moisturiser is.....

You should use this on all dry areas of skin, on the body and face every few hours if possible.

Use plenty on dry skin as it will soak it up. An ideal time to apply moisturisers is a few minutes after a warm bath or shower while the skin is slightly damp.

Your soap substitute is.....

All soaps tend to dry the skin leaving it feeling tight and itchy, and this tends to aggravate eczema. You can use this soap substitute instead for washing and cleaning your skin. Apply some on your fingertips when the skin is damp, and rinse off with warm water. Dry the skin thoroughly with a clean towel afterwards.

Your bath additive is.....

Your steroid or combination steroid and antibiotic cream or ointments are:

For the face.....Apply morning and evening

For the body.....Apply morning and evening

Apply these as a thin layer on the affected areas and smooth them in gently. Allow 15 minutes for steroid creams and ointments to soak into the skin before putting on the moisturiser.

You may need different strengths of steroid preparations according to how severe your eczema is. They come in a range of four different strengths, and some have added ingredients like antibiotics. If you have a collection of different steroids and are confused about what you should be using on different parts of the body, take the tubes along and ask your doctor to advise you.

If you have any further questions, please contact your child's consultant via their secretary via the hospital switchboard. The secretaries are available Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm

If you need to contact the department outside of these hours, please phone either:

Ward 3F      0151 430 1616

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