

ECZEMA INFORMATION HANDOUT

ECZEMA:

- Unknown cause
- Impaired barrier of the skin allowing for increased penetration of allergens (dust mites) and hyperactivity of the immune system to bacteria, viruses allergens
- Commonly associated with hay fever and asthma
- Genetic
- Relapsing and remitting course

Symptoms:

- Dry patches
- Itchy skin
- Thickened skin

Treatment:

- Apply steroid creams/ointments as directed: use a dime size to cover a palm size area and apply thinly and rub into involved areas TWICE daily
 - Weak cortisone creams/ointments have no significant side effects such as thinning of the skin e.g. hydrocortisone
 - Stronger cortisone creams/ointments are required for short periods to control eczema e.g. betamethasone valerate
- Anti-histamines: use as a mild sedative when scratching leads to poor sleep
- Antibiotics are sometimes necessary to treat skin infections
- Oral steroids (prednisone) may be necessary to treat severe skin infection



Prevention:

- Lukewarm baths or showers 1-3 times daily with mild skin cleanser (e.g. Dove unscented soap) and pat skin dry
- Moisturize daily to damp skin after bathing which traps water to the skin and improves the barrier function, also apply daily to prevent itch
 - Aveeno, Glaxal Base, Vaseline cream, Aquaphor, Petroleum Jelly
 - Avoid products with fragrance, urea and alpha hydroxylacids
 - Wet wrap overnight of lotions/medications during eczema flares – www.eczemacentre.org
- DO NOT SCRATCH – this breaks the barrier of the skin further and increases risk of infection (keep nails short and smooth)
- Identify and avoid triggers
 - Avoiding specific foods as appropriate
 - Dust mites (vacuum bedroom carpet daily, use special mattress and pillow covers under cotton liners and wash weekly, and change furnace filters every 3-4 months)
- Using soft clothing (e.g. cotton) next to the skin; wool products should be avoided, wear loose clothing during the warm weather
- Rubber gloves over cotton gloves for wet work
- Maintaining cool temperatures, particularly at night
- Using a humidifier (cool mist) in both winter and summer
- Washing clothes in a mild detergent, with no bleach or fabric softener
- Infection control: add ¼ to ½ cup of Javex to bath (tub half full) twice weekly and sit in bath for 5-10 minutes (avoid if have active cold sores).

