

What is eczema?

A parent/carer's guide to the condition and its treatments



Eczema...

- is a dry, itchy skin condition
- is often red
- can run in families along with asthma and/or hayfever
- eczema has no cure but by the time they reach teenage years, 75% of children will have grown out of it
- can be made to feel much better by using certain treatments



You...

can make a big difference to your child's eczema by finding treatments and a good skin care routine that suits your child and the rest of the family.



This leaflet will help you to make informed choices about treatments that you can discuss further with your pharmacist, GP or nurse.

There are two types of treatment that you will need to use:

1 moisturisers

2 steroid ointments and creams

Sometimes you will just need to use moisturisers, but when the eczema is worse you will need to use both steroids *and* moisturisers.

You should NEVER use steroids by themselves.

What are the main treatments for eczema?

The table below gives an outline of the differences between moisturisers and steroids.

	Moisturisers	Steroid ointments and creams
What else might they be called?	Emollients	Topical steroids (i.e. steroids that are applied to the skin)
When should I use them?	Whenever the skin is dry	When the skin is red
What do they do?	Trap moisture in the skin making it less dry, more supple and less itchy	Reduce the redness and itching
How long should I use them for?	Continually, as long as your child has eczema	For periods of time when the eczema gets red. It is important to have periods of time when no steroids are used
What formats do they come in?	<p>Creams, ointments, gels and sprays which are applied directly to the skin</p> <p>Soap substitutes which are applied and washed off</p> <p>Bath additives (oils) which are put into the bath water</p>	<p>Ointments in a tube which are transparent and greasy, and may sting less than creams if the skin is sensitive or broken</p> <p>Creams in a tube are less greasy and white, but may sting more than ointments</p>

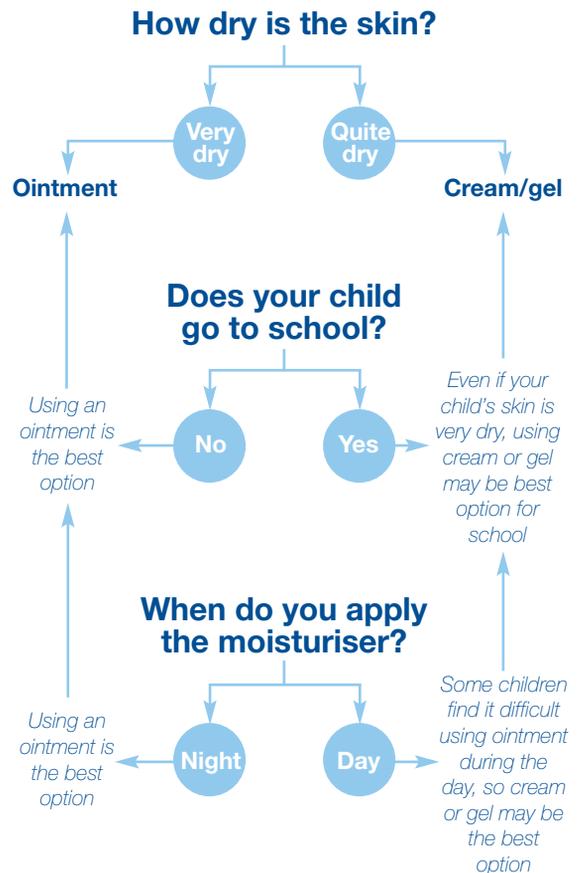
NOTE: BOTH MOISTURISERS AND STEROIDS COME IN CREAM AND OINTMENT FORMULATIONS.

Which moisturiser should I use for my child?

There are lots of moisturisers to choose from.

The diagram below is designed to help you along with your pharmacist, GP or nurse, to make the right choice for your child.

You might need more than one type of moisturiser to suit different times of the day.



Applying moisturisers



Ointment moisturisers are greasy and look transparent, they usually come in pots. Some examples include: Hydromol® ointment, Epaderm® and Emulsifying ointment.

Cream/Gel moisturisers are white and come in pump dispensers. Some examples include Zerobase®,

Cetraben®, Balneum® cream and Doublebase® gel.

- Stroke the moisturiser gently into the skin following the lie of the hair. Do not rub the skin, it doesn't matter if the moisturiser sits on the surface, it will soon soak in
- Apply whenever the skin is dry, this may be every couple of hours. You may need to get through a big 500g pot each 7-10 days
- Don't run out! - make sure you have the next pot ready before the one you are using is finished

Applying steroid ointments and creams

You should always discuss using topical steroids with a healthcare professional, however there are some general rules:

- Only start using topical steroids when the skin is red and inflamed
- One fingertip unit (see picture below) is enough to cover an area of eczema the size of two of your hands



- Use for a fixed period of time (discuss how long with your GP, pharmacist or nurse)
- Always allow the moisturiser to soak in before applying the steroid



Things to avoid

because they can make eczema worse!

The things that make eczema worse (also known as trigger factors) will vary from person to person.

- One thing everyone with eczema should avoid is soap and bubble bath as they dry the skin. Most of the cream moisturisers can be used as a soap substitute, apply to the skin as you would do soap, and rinse off



- Getting too hot almost always makes eczema worse, try and keep cool, wearing cotton clothing is best
- Furry pets, dust and perfumes can be problematic for some
- Occasionally some food might aggravate eczema in younger children, but this is unusual

An example of a possible routine for a school age child with active eczema using a twice daily topical steroid:

- Get up!
- Apply chosen moisturiser all over
- Have breakfast
- Apply topical steroids to red areas as per finger-tip-units
- Take moisturiser to school and apply twice during school
- Apply moisturiser on return from school
- After tea have a bath using soap substitute to wash with. You may also like to add a bath additive, but no bubble bath and no soap!
- Apply moisturiser
- After half an hour apply second dose of topical steroid
- Go to bed!

Where can I find out more about eczema?

Call the National Eczema Society helpline on **0800 089 1122** or visit **www.eczema.org**



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