

Eczema

What is it?

Eczema, also called atopic dermatitis, is dry and irritated skin. Eczema often appears on the face, neck, body folds and hands. If you have eczema, you are more likely to have a skin infection. Eczema can last for a long time or come and go. It may also flare up at certain times. In a flare up, the skin becomes more inflamed and may get red and weepy with blisters. Many people with eczema also have allergies or asthma.

While there is no cure for eczema, there are many treatment options that can reduce flares and provide relief. Treatment also involves finding known causes or triggers of symptoms. Keeping away from products that bother the skin, like creams and lotions, also helps manage symptoms.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP may explain more about your treatment options. They may give you some advice about known triggers, such as:

- Harsh products like soaps, shampoos and dish washing liquids
- Dry weather, dampness and dust
- Pet fur, pollen and mould
- Lifestyle factors like stress and poor diet

Your GP may give you tips to take care of your skin and improve your symptoms (see *What can I do* below).

Your treatment will depend on the triggers and symptoms. Treatment may include:

- Short-term topical steroids
- Lifestyle changes
- Moisturiser
- Self-care strategies

If you are not getting better or are finding it hard to cope with your rash, your GP may refer you to a skin specialist, called a dermatologist.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may want to see you again to check how your treatment is going.

When you see your GP again, they may:

- Change your treatment if it hasn't been working well
- Test a patch of skin to find the cause
- Refer you to a dermatologist and then stay up to date with your progress

What can I do?

Work with your GP to find a treatment that works for you. There's a lot you can do to help your skin and health. As well as following your GP's advice, you can:

- Keep your skin soft
- Avoid harsh products that bother the skin, like soaps
- Wear loose, cotton clothes and use cotton linen
- Avoid hot showers
- Avoid scratching and rubbing
- Eat a healthy diet
- Move daily
- Manage stress levels, as stress can cause flares

What supports are available?

Liverpool Hospital Dermatology Department

The Liverpool Hospital Dermatology Department provides a broad range of skin services with dermatologists. With staff working in common and rare skin issues, the team offer treatment for all ages, from newborns to those over 80 and pregnant women. As your GP to refer you or phone **8738 4560**

Private specialists

Private dermatologists are available in the district. Ask your GP for a referral.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Should I use any creams?
- Which creams should I avoid?
- How can I find my triggers?
- How can I best look after my skin?
- Should I see a specialist?
- Do I need a skin patch test?



Where can I learn more?

- **Eczema Association Australasia**
Facts About Eczema: eczema.org.au
Moisturisers (Emollients) and Eczema: eczema.org.au
- **Patient Info** - Routine skin care: patientinfo.org.au
- **Cleveland Clinic** - Emollients: my.clevelandclinic.org
- **Better Health Channel** - Eczema (atopic dermatitis): betterhealth.vic.gov.au