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DERMATOLOGY

ATOPIC DERMATITIS / ATOPIC ECZEMA

Atopic dermatitis is a fairly common skin condition that usually first appears at a young age. Any area of the body may be affected. The skin is frequently **dry, red, rough or scaly, and ITCHY**. Itchiness can be severe and children may scratch or rub while awake, or even while sleeping. Affected individuals are often **prone to allergies, runny nose, or asthma**. Family members commonly have allergies, asthma, or similar skin problems. The good news is, the condition **tends to improve as we age**.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

The skin loses moisture easily, and the rash is easily irritated by everyday substances such as soaps, detergents, fragrances, hot water, rough fabrics (especially wool), etc. **Mild, fragrance-free products** are the best choices. We recommend using a mild soap such as Cetaphil cleanser or Dove soap. Frequent **moisturization is the key**. **Avoid long hot showers or bubble baths**, and after bathing, pat body down lightly with a towel, then immediately apply a fragrance-free moisturizer while body is still damp (such as Cetaphil, Eucerin, etc).

TREATMENT

Your dermatologist will often prescribe a **steroid cream or ointment** to apply to the areas to control inflamed, itchy skin. Please be aware that these are meant to be **used for flares, and are not meant to be used chronically**. *Inappropriate and excessive use of topical steroids can cause permanent damage to the skin (skin thinning, stretch marks, scars)*. When a rash has improved, the frequent use of prescription medications such as **Protopic or Elidel**, or moisturizing products such as Vaseline, Aquaphor, or bland moisturizers, will help prevent or decrease the severity of rash recurrences. These products can be used as often as you wish without risk of damage to the skin.

If there is sudden worsening of the skin condition, and it doesn't resolve with your current treatment regimen, this may signify an infection, and this should be evaluated by your dermatologist.

Remember, this conditions may last for many years, and requires effort and patience. A slow response to treatment or flare-ups of the rash can be uncomfortable to the child, and frustrating for the caregiver(s). Please discuss any problems, concerns or questions with your dermatologist. Your doctor may need you to return to the office regularly until the rash is under control.