

A photograph of a woman with long, dark hair, seen from the back. She is wearing a white top and has her right hand raised to scratch her neck. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage. A large, bright blue diagonal shape overlaps the bottom left corner of the image, containing the text.

# Eczema

Health support pack

This pack has been created by a team of children's health and wellbeing specialists from Evelina London, King's College Hospital and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. Our aim is to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people with eczema in Lambeth and Southwark.

This booklet is correct at the time of publishing. It will be subject to review and updates. This resource is not a substitute for advice from your child's health professional but an additional resource to improve the health and wellbeing of your child.

For comments or feedback on this pack please email [gst-tr.cyp@nhs.net](mailto:gst-tr.cyp@nhs.net).

April 2024

## What is eczema?

Eczema is a very common condition affecting 1 in 5 children.

Find out on page 4.

## Top tips for eczema

Read our top tips on how best to control and treat eczema, see pages 14 - 15.

## Having eczema can affect your child's emotions and behaviour

Please see page 25 - 27 for suggestions on managing issues that might affect your child's wellbeing, and page 28 for ideas about looking after yourself as a parent or carer.

# Contents

Topic	Page number(s)
What is eczema?	4
Common and important triggers	6 – 9
Indoor triggers	6 - 8
Outdoor triggers	8
Other triggers	9
Identifying triggers that make your child's eczema worse	10
Eczema trigger tracker	11
Patient–Oriented Eczema Measure (POEM)	12
Avoiding eczema triggers	13
Top tips for eczema	14 - 15
How to manage your child's eczema	16 - 23
Frequently asked questions	24
General wellbeing and eczema	25 - 34
Looking after yourself as a parent or carer	28
Look after your emotional wellbeing	29
Looking after your family	30 - 34

## What is eczema?

Eczema (also called dermatitis) is an inflammatory skin condition that leads to dry skin. Eczema is a very common condition, affecting 1 in 5 children. Each child's eczema looks different and will need slightly different treatment. Eczema cannot be caught from another person and your child might grow out of it.

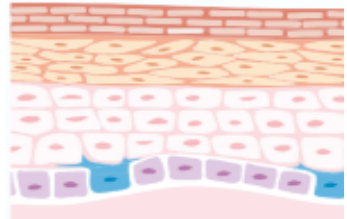
### Signs and symptoms of eczema

Children with eczema have skin that may feel different, for example dry, rough or bumpy. Children with eczema commonly have:

- very itchy skin
- red inflamed skin
- skin that can be sensitive to extremes of temperature

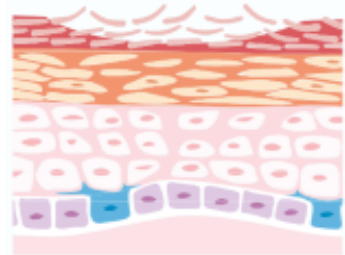
Healthy skin is like a brick wall. It has plump skin cells which are full of water, they are surrounded by fats and natural oils. Healthy skin is waterproof and protective, keeping moisture in and external irritants, allergens and bacteria out.

#### Healthy skin



Skin with eczema may not be able to produce the same amount of water, fats and natural oils as healthy skin. This makes it dry out, and lose moisture and its protective layer. Skin with eczema is easily damaged. This allows external irritants in, such as allergens and bacteria, causing it to be more likely to become red, inflamed and possibly infected.

#### Skin with eczema



## Causes of eczema

The exact causes of eczema are unknown. We think that it is caused by a combination of your genes (as it is often seen in families) and external irritants as explained earlier. Children with eczema might also have asthma or hay fever. You might notice that certain things known as eczema triggers make your child's eczema worse (flare). See pages 6 - 9 for more information

## Other conditions linked to eczema

Hayfever (allergic rhinitis), asthma and allergies (such as food allergies) and eczema are all called atopic. This means they have features in common, and the conditions often occur together.

It is also common for more than 1 person in a family to have these conditions. Reducing exposure to allergic triggers and using medicine to improve these atopic conditions will also improve eczema.



For more information about eczema please visit [Eczema Care Online](#) – [YouTube](#)










## Common and important triggers

'Triggers' are the things that make your child's eczema worse and can be different for each child.



The table below describes common triggers and tips on managing them.

Indoor triggers	Useful information to help your child
<p><b>Cleaning products</b></p> 	<p>Household cleaners, detergents and sprays, whether in liquid form or as airborne particles, can irritate the skin of people with eczema. They can cause a type of eczema called irritant contact dermatitis (ICD). People with a history of atopic eczema (see page 5) are more likely to have sensitive skin and are therefore more vulnerable to ICD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Try using 'old-fashioned' cleaning agents which do not contain chemicals and preservatives:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ white vinegar instead of glass cleaner</li> <li>➤ bicarbonate of soda instead of bleach</li> <li>➤ soda crystals instead of bathroom/kitchen cleaners</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Keep windows and doors open when cleaning so the room is well ventilated</li> <li>● Try steam cleaning as it avoids the need for chemicals</li> <li>● Wear protective gloves while doing housework – try rubber or PVC household gloves with a cotton liner or worn over 100% cotton gloves.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Damp and mould</b></p> 	<p>Damp and mould can make eczema worse.</p> <p>Have a look at the <a href="#">Centre for sustainable energy website</a> for advice on getting rid of damp and mould.</p> <p>If you need more support and live in a council home you might find this advice from Shelter helpful: <a href="#">How to report repairs to a council or housing association landlord</a>.</p>

Indoor triggers	Useful information to help your child
<p><b>Dust and dust mites</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dust in the home can irritate the skin. Dust often contains microscopic dust mites, which are especially irritating for eczema.</li> <li>• clean away the dust regularly with a damp cloth</li> <li>• wash bed sheets at 60°C</li> <li>• carpets, fabrics and soft toys can hold dust mites. Wash or vacuum these regularly.</li> <li>• you can put soft toys in the freezer for at least 24 hours (dust mites hate to be frozen) or wash them regularly</li> <li>• try to keep soft toys away from the bed</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fabrics</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cut out labels in clothes (including school uniform)</li> <li>• rough clothing and labels can scratch the skin and make your child itchy</li> <li>• try to avoid clothing, sheets, pillowcases and duvet covers made from synthetic fabrics. Clothes and sheets which are 100% cotton are more comfortable as they are breathable, sweat-absorbent and less likely to cause overheating.</li> <li>• use low-tog duvets and/or several light layers that can be put on/taken off in the bed, as this can help maintain an even temperature and skin will be less prone to itch</li> </ul>
<p><b>Food allergies / intolerances</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consider keeping a food diary for your child, as certain foods might make your child's eczema worse</li> <li>• if you identify any possible triggers, talk about your child's diet with their doctor or nurse to make sure your child gets everything they need to grow and develop</li> </ul>

Indoor triggers	Useful information to help your child
<p><b>Pets</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consider not having pets, as dander (dead skin), saliva (spit), and pee (urine) from furry pets can irritate the skin</li> <li>• make sure your child washes their hands after touching animals</li> <li>• you might need to avoid visiting houses with pets</li> </ul>
<p><b>Soaps, detergents, perfumes</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use soap or perfumes</li> <li>• use your child's moisturisers in the bath (they might make the bath slippery so be careful)</li> <li>• if your child is sensitive to detergents, try non-bio washing powder with no smell. Use liquids rather than the tablets, so you can control the amount you use.</li> <li>• try putting your washing on an extra rinse to remove any leftover detergent</li> <li>• avoid using fabric conditioner</li> </ul>
<p><b>Swimming</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chemicals in a swimming pool can irritate and dry out the skin</li> <li>• make sure your child showers well after swimming and apply emollients as soon as possible</li> </ul>
Outdoor triggers	Useful information to help your child
<p><b>Pollen</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pollen and tiny particles in the air can make the skin worse</li> <li>• close windows at night and avoid drying clothes outside. Washing your child's face and hair after being outside can help.</li> <li>• your child should avoid playing in freshly cut grass</li> <li>• avoid opening windows during high pollen season</li> </ul>



Other triggers	Useful information to help your child
<p data-bbox="90 220 239 284"><b>Stress and hormones</b></p> 	<ul data-bbox="288 220 986 459" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a look at page 27 for advice on supporting your child's emotional wellbeing. Feeling stressed can make your child's eczema worse.</li> <li>• Always encourage your child to use their moisturisers more often during puberty or when they have their periods. Hormones can change their skin's behaviour.</li> </ul>
<p data-bbox="76 483 255 579"><b>Temperature changes and sweating</b></p> 	<p data-bbox="288 483 992 643">Sweating, being too hot or too cold are common triggers for eczema. Temperature changes i.e. going from indoor warmth to outdoor cold can also be a trigger. Central heating reduces humidity and dries out the skin which makes it itchy.</p> <ul data-bbox="288 687 930 1042" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• try to keep rooms cool</li> <li>• keep the home well-ventilated in the winter</li> <li>• a change in the weather when you go on holiday abroad might trigger your child's eczema</li> <li>• layering clothing allows your child to manage temperature changes more easily</li> <li>• if your child is becoming sweaty with a greasy emollient, it may be a good idea to swap to a lighter emollient especially during the warmer months</li> </ul>

## Identifying triggers that make your child's eczema worse

Triggers are different for each child. It is important to work out what triggers matter for your child.

### Identifying your child's eczema triggers

Here are some ideas that will help you identify your child's triggers. If possible, you and your child should look at this section together to help identify triggers.

Every time your child's eczema gets worse:

- Make a note of what is around your child, and what they are doing when their eczema is worse. The 'trigger tracker' on the next page may help with this.
- Fill out the tracker with your child.
- Try and do this for at least 7 days to see what possible triggers your child might have been close to or what they did differently.
- Over time, you will be able to spot patterns and identify the triggers that matter to your child.














#### Top tips

Remember to be patient, as spotting triggers can take time. It might be useful to set daily reminders on your phone, or use a diary so you and your child remember to keep a record.

Try and work on the things you can do every day. It will get easier with time, and you should find you are doing them without even having to think about it.

# Eczema trigger tracker

What was around your child, or what were they doing, when their eczema got worse? Please tick ( ✓ ) those that apply

Indoor triggers				
Cleaning products  <input type="checkbox"/>	Damp and mould  <input type="checkbox"/>	Dust and dust mites  <input type="checkbox"/>	Fabrics  <input type="checkbox"/>	Food allergies / intolerances  <input type="checkbox"/>
Pets  <input type="checkbox"/>	Soaps, detergents, perfumes  <input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming  <input type="checkbox"/>		
Outdoor triggers				
Pollen  <input type="checkbox"/>				
Other triggers				
Stress and hormones  <input type="checkbox"/>	Temperature changes and sweating  <input type="checkbox"/>			

Other .....

## Patient–Oriented Eczema Measure (POEM)

Try using the POEM score below to assess your child’s eczema severity rating.

Over the **last week**:

1. On how many days has your child’s skin been itchy because of the eczema?
2. On how many nights has your child’s sleep been disturbed because of the eczema?
3. On how many days has your child’s skin been bleeding because of the eczema?
4. On how many days has your child’s skin been weeping or oozing clear fluid because of the eczema?
5. On how many days has your child’s skin been cracked because of the eczema?
6. On how many days has your child’s skin been flaking off because of the eczema?
7. On how many days has your child’s skin felt dry or rough because of the eczema?

### How is the scoring done?

Each of the seven questions carries equal weight and is scored from 0 to 4 as follows:

No days =	0
1-2 days =	1
3-4 days =	2
5-6 days =	3
Every day =	4

### What does the POEM score mean?

Total scoring rating:

0 to 2 = Clear or almost clear

3 to 7 = Mild eczema

8 to 16 = Moderate eczema

17 to 24 = Severe eczema

25 to 28 = Very severe eczema

Question Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total score
Score								

## Avoiding eczema triggers

Now that you and your child have identified some eczema triggers, your child will need to avoid them as much as they can. Not all triggers can be avoided but, by making some small changes, it might be possible to avoid a lot of them.

You can use the table below to keep a note of your child's triggers and create plan to avoid them. Write down your child's triggers that you have identified. Then, write down some reasons why it is hard to avoid these triggers. Finally, write some ideas for what you can do to avoid these. The first two rows are examples. There are top tips on the next 2 pages and have a look at the trigger table on pages 6 – 9.

### Eczema trigger avoidance plan

<b>Trigger</b>	<b>Reason it's hard to avoid these triggers</b>	<b>Ideas of what you can do</b>
<i>Cats</i>	<i>We own a cat</i>	<i>Keep the cat out of my child's bedroom  Consider rehoming the cat.</i>
<i>Soap</i>	<i>My child needs to use soap every day</i>	<i>Wash with emollients or mild soaps without dyes or fragrances</i>



## Top tips for eczema



### Babies

Apply your baby's emollient after bath time. If you are finding it challenging to leave enough time to allow it to soak in, try putting a snug-fitting vest on over the top. This will help keep the creams from being rubbed or scratched off.

If your baby gets cradle cap, try putting a very thick layer of cream-based emollient on for half an hour, then wash it off and comb through. This will help lift off the cradle cap. You can also wash your baby's hair with emollient, but be careful not to pick the skin off as this increase risk of bleeding or infection.



### School-age children and young people

Keeping creams in the fridge, especially when it's hot weather, can really help cool the itch. Please note that this is not suitable for babies.

Sometimes if your child's skin is really itchy at night a cold compress (flannel or cloth) on the skin can really help to cool it down.



### Teenagers

When trying new make-up, advise them to try a small amount for a few days first, to see how their skin reacts.

Encourage them to keep their creams and a steroid in a washbag they really like.

If they itch a lot overnight and wake up with small patches of blood on their sheets, try getting darker sheets to reduce any anxiety.



## Top tips for eczema



### Everyone

If you are struggling to remember to use the moisturisers or steroids, put a reminder in your phone.

If the itch gets really hard to control for your child, try distracting them with toys or games, such as beads, play dough, stress balls or fidget spinners.



### Holidays

Make sure when you go in the sun, you use a high-factor sun cream for your child. Make sure you leave an hour or more after putting their emollient on, as it can make their skin more likely to burn.

Sun creams are also good barriers to protect the skin when swimming, as they often contain zinc, so form a protective layer from the water.

Over the summer months when it's often warmer, cream-based emollients can be better as they sometimes feel less 'sweaty'.

If you are using sunscreen for the first time for your child, consider putting a small amount on their skin first, to make sure they do not react to it.

The [National Eczema Society](#) has useful information about eczema and the sun.

## How to manage your child's eczema

Children with eczema have a better chance of living a happy, healthy life if they follow expert advice to look after their eczema.

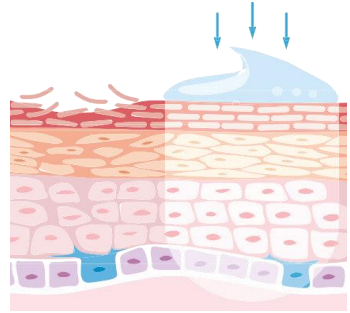
### Eczema treatments

#### Emollients

The basis of eczema treatment is using moisturisers called emollients. These are special non-cosmetic moisturisers, which keep the skin flexible, moist, and comfortable.

Applying emollients helps to trap water in the skin by creating a 'seal' on the surface. They also replace the lost fats and natural oils.

By repairing the 'brick wall' the emollient also helps to prevent further moisture loss and penetration by irritants and allergens.



There are lots of different emollients, including **ointments**, **creams**, and **lotions**. You might be given several of these to use at different times.

#### Ointments

Ointments form the most air-tight and waterproof layer of all the emollients, so are good at preventing water from leaving the skin. Ointments work well if the skin is moderately to severely dry. People often like to use these at night.

#### Creams

Creams feel less greasy than ointments, spread easily, and can be washed off easily. However, they are less air tight and waterproof than ointments, and so allow less water to be absorbed into the skin.

#### Lotions

Lotions are runny, spread easily and can be washed off. They are good for mildly dry skin, and areas that are hairy like the scalp.



## How to apply emollients

Wash and dry your hands before putting the emollient on the skin. This reduces the amount of bacteria transferred from your hands into the tubs.

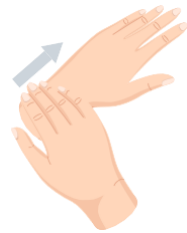


If you are using a tub of emollient it is important not to 'double dip'. This is when you put your hand into the tub, apply to the skin and put your hands **back into** the tub. This can put germs or bacteria into the tub.



Ideally use a spoon to take out the amount needed. Do not put left-over cream back into the tub, and keep the tub closed when not in use.

To reduce irritation, apply the emollient down the body in the direction of hair growth. It is important not to rub them in as this can cause more irritation, block hair follicles and trigger a flare up.



## When to apply emollients

Emollients should be used as frequently as possible, and when the skin feels dry. It is often recommended to use emollients 4 to 8 times a day, or even more often, although this can be a lot of work.

During an eczema flare up, it is important to use them a lot to help repair and protect the skin.

It is important to treat the eczema, and to continue using emollients when the skin is healthy, to maintain it.



Some emollients and creams contain paraffin, which is a good source of oil (lipid). Paraffin is highly flammable so it is important to be very careful near open flames and cigarettes.

To read more about this go to this [government webpage](#).

### Do

- ✓ apply emollients as regularly as you can
- ✓ apply emollients in downward strokes
- ✓ when bathing, make sure the water is lukewarm, as hot water can make skin more itchy.
- ✓ keep your child's fingernails short and smooth to avoid scratching marks.
- ✓ carry emollients in small pots when you go out.

### Do not

- ✗ rub the skin dry. Pat it dry instead
- ✗ put fingers in tubs without washing hands first (and do not 'double dip')
- ✗ let your child bath or shower for longer than 20 minutes
- ✗ share emollients with other children
- ✗ smoke or be near flames when using paraffin-based emollients

## Topical steroids

Corticosteroids are commonly used to control eczema. They are used in combination with emollients. When used correctly they are very effective in reducing inflammation, and this allows the skin to heal. Some parents and carers worry about using topical steroids on their child's skin. 'Topical' means that they are applied directly to the skin.

Common worries are that their child will become dependent on the steroids to keep their skin well, or change the colour of, or thin, the skin. These problems are uncommon, and your healthcare team will regularly review your child's treatment plan, and the use of steroids, to make sure these are used effectively.

Steroids come in different strengths (potencies) which are shown below. When you see the doctor or nurse about your child's eczema, they will think carefully and ask you questions about how your child's skin has been, to help them pick the best steroid and length of treatment to help your child get well. Sometimes it's better to have a short course of a stronger steroid and sometimes it's better to use a weaker steroid for a bit longer. Your doctor or nurse will discuss this with you.

It is important to follow the instructions about using the topical steroids. If you stop the topical steroid too early, the deeper layers of the skin, which we cannot see, might not have healed. This increases the risk of the eczema becoming worse or flaring up.

### STRONGER STEROIDS

**Mometasone Furoate 0.1% (Elocon)**

*Potent topical steroids*

**Betamethasone valerate 0.1% (Betnovate)**

**Clobetasone Butyrate 0.05% (Eumovate)**

*Moderate topical steroids*

**Betamethasone valerate 0.025% (Betnovate RD)**

**Hydrocortisone 1%**

*Mild topical steroids*

**Hydrocortisone 0.5%**

### WEAKER STEROIDS

## Fingertip units (FTUs)

### Fingertip units for a child's body



Face  
and  
neck



Arm  
and  
hand



Leg  
and  
foot



Trunk  
(front)



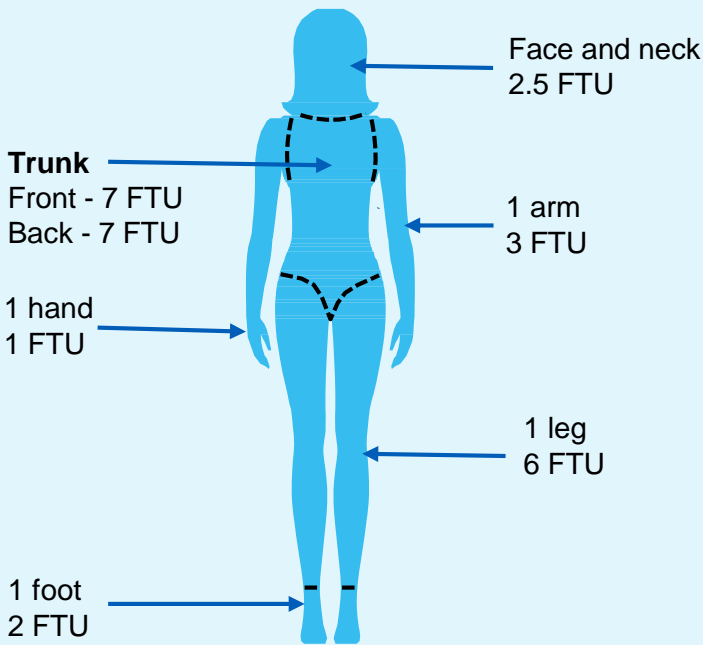
Trunk  
(back,  
including  
bottom)



Use the adult fingertip unit (FTU) as your guide. Topical steroids work well when applied as a small layer. This also reduces the risk of side effects. FTUs can help you to use the right amount.

Age of child	Number of adult FTUs				
	Face & neck	Arm & hand	Leg & foot	Trunk (front)	Trunk (back)
3 to 6 months	1	1	1.5	1	1.5
1 to 2 years	1.5	1.5	2	2	3
3 to 5 years	1.5	2	2	3	3.5
6 to 10 years	2	2.5	4.5	3.5	5

## Fingertip units (FTUs) for an adult body



If you have any questions or concerns, you can speak to your local pharmacist or your child's health professional for advice.



### Top tip

The steroid works better if the emollient is used first.

Try to leave a 30-minute gap between applying the emollient and the steroid for the best results.

## Stepping up and down treatment: what does this mean?

Most people who have been prescribed a topical steroid will generally need to use it 1 or 2 times each day, for 1 or 2 weeks. When the eczema flare is better, the steroid is then stopped or stepped down, depending on the first prescription.

If your child was prescribed a mild steroid you will probably be told to stop when it's no longer needed. If the mild steroid is not working you may be advised to try a stronger topical steroid.

If your child was prescribed a more potent steroid then you might be advised to 'step down' (reduce) either the frequency of application, or change to a less potent steroid. For example, if your child has severe eczema, you might start with a potent steroid one time every day. This might then be stepped down to 3 days a week, and then to 2 consecutive days a week (known as 'weekend therapy').

Children who have frequent flare ups might be told to have weekend therapy over a long period of time. The steroid is applied to the area where the eczema usually flares. Weekend therapy can help reduce your child's inflammation and prevent a flare up.

When stepping down, if your child has a flare up, you can step up to applying the steroid every day. Once the flare has settled you can start the step down process again.



## Wet wraps

Wet wraps can be helpful if you are struggling to treat the eczema and it is affecting large parts of the body. They are cotton bandages soaked in lukewarm water which cover a thick layer of emollient to help absorb moisture, reduce the itch, and heal any damage caused by scratching. A dry layer is then put on top. We usually recommend that these are worn overnight. Please see youtube for how to apply:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNdHI5NdTsl>

It is advisable not to use wet wraps if your child is:

- unwell
- has a high temperature (fever)
- has infected eczema

Speak to your doctor or nurse about when you can restart using the wet wraps.

## Infected eczema

Sometimes children with eczema will have broken skin which becomes infected. If the skin becomes infected, it might:

- look more red
- look swollen
- weep (look wet)
- crust (scab)
- become more painful

If you think your child's skin might be infected, it is important that your child is **seen urgently** by your local GP, or contact 111.

## Frequently asked questions

### **Is my child at risk of developing asthma?**

A third of children with eczema (1 in 3) develop asthma.

### **Will my child grow out of eczema?**

For 7 out of 10 (70%) children with eczema, the eczema improves and skin clears as they get older. For these children eczema can come back.

For 3 out of 10 (30%) children with eczema, visible eczema continues into adulthood.

### **How serious is eczema?**

Eczema is not life threatening, but it can have a serious effect on daily life and emotional wellbeing.

### **Are steroids safe to use?**

Steroids are the safest treatment for inflamed eczema if used as prescribed, and if the amount is measured using the fingertip unit method.

### **Is there a cure for eczema?**

No, but it can be controlled effectively.

### **Why is aqueous cream bad for eczema?**

Aqueous cream contains 1% sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS) which has been proven to thin the skin and can cause irritation.

### **What triggers make my child's eczema worse?**

Triggers are different for each child. It is important to work out what triggers matter to your child. Using the information on pages 6 – 9 will help you identify and avoid the triggers



## General wellbeing and eczema

Having eczema can affect your child's emotions and behaviour. Understanding eczema takes time and can be tricky for children. Eczema can be unpredictable and impact on lifestyle and relationships with family and friends. Below are some common issues and some thoughts on how to manage them.

### Going to school

Eczema should not stop your child doing well at school. It might make it harder for them to go to school and might result in them getting behind with school work.

- Try talking to your child about any difficulties in school and what makes it harder for them to be in school. You may be surprised to discover that the things that worry them about school are not the things you thought would worry them.
- Speak to the school about your and your child's worries to find ways to help.

### Managing bullying

Many children get teased or bullied, which can be very stressful. They might become quieter, withdrawn or struggle to go to school.

If this happens, you might help by encouraging your child to tell you what is happening and how they are feeling. Ask them, be patient and let them talk when they're ready. Listen, and be supportive.

Parents and schools should always think about how the child feels, when addressing issues with teasing or bullying.

Schools are usually experienced in helping, and should have anti-bullying policies. Talk with your child's school about what's happening, and what's being done to help.

## Problems sleeping

Lack of good-quality sleep can affect a child's mood and behaviour, and can make it more difficult to concentrate.

- It is helpful to set a regular bedtime. Your child should not watch TV or play with phones or other electronic devices for at least an hour before bedtime.
- Think about helping your child with a 'winding down' routine at least an hour before bedtime, doing activities that are calming and relaxing.

For more information, you can visit the [Sleep Council](#) site or the NHS guidance on [Healthy sleep tips for children](#).

## Self-confidence

Having eczema, particularly if symptoms are difficult to manage, can affect your child's self-confidence.

- Encourage them to develop a positive attitude about themselves, despite their health issues.
- Help them focus on their achievements.
- Support their interaction with their friends/peers.

## Behavioural issues

Symptoms of eczema (and the need to follow a treatment plan) can be very frustrating for your child. They might affect your child's behaviour, sometimes leading to conflict and arguments in the family.

Sticking to boundaries might be more difficult when your child's symptoms are more problematic.

- Be clear with your child about what you expect of them when they are ill, and when they are well.
- Recognise and reward positive behaviours.
- Encourage your child to talk about their frustrations.

## Feeling stressed

Children can feel stressed for different reasons, such as having tests or exams or if they are experiencing changes in family life (such as moving house, changing school, having a new teacher). Stress often has an impact on children's health and can make their eczema worse.

- Be familiar with your child's school routine and ask about changes. Your child might not talk to you about them or realise the impact on their health. Make sure you also discuss your child's worries with their school so you can be kept informed of relevant changes.
- Keep your child involved in family plans, as appropriate for their age. Parents and carers sometimes don't realise that children know about changes in the family, or that they might worry about them.

## Worrying and feeling down

Children may feel anxious or down about everyday things, like their own health needs, or that something might happen to them. It can be hard for parents or carers to start a conversation about these feelings, but it's important to do it, so here are some tips:

- Start talking with your child, so that they can get the help they need. Let them know that it is normal to feel upset sometimes.
- Don't worry about making things worse by asking them about it. It won't!
- Trying to talk things through once is often not enough to understand their issues. You may have to try several times and in different ways. It might also be helpful to discuss your concerns with school or close family members to see if they share them.

## Useful websites

[MindEd for Families](#) is a free learning resource about the mental health of children, young people and older adults.

[Family lives](#) provides support to families, including in crisis situations [Childline](#) or [phone](#) 0800 1111 to speak to a counsellor.

[Kooth](#) online counselling for children and young people aged 11 - 25

[YoungMinds](#) for urgent help [text](#) YM to 85258, or [phone](#) 0808 802 5544 for a parent helpline.

[Anna Freud](#) provides resources for children, young people and parents

[Good Thinking](#) provides digital mental wellbeing for Londoners

[List of other websites](#) that provide mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people

## Looking after yourself as a parent or carer

Looking after a child with eczema can be tiring, overwhelming and frustrating. While it might be hard to think about your own needs, it is important to look after yourself as this will help both you and your child.

### Think about your own support

- Try talking more with another trusted adult about the worries and challenges of looking after your child's eczema. This could be a family member or a close friend. The important point is that they are able to make the time to listen to you, and that they do so without judgement or criticism.
- If you have a partner, or if you share the care of your child with another adult (such as a family member), it is useful that you have the chance to talk to each other about how you each feel things are going.

### Look after your own health

- Healthy eating, sufficient sleep and regular exercise are important factors in maintaining your own good health.
- Whenever practically possible, it is important that you take a bit of time for yourself to rest and do things you enjoy or help you relax. This will help 'recharge your batteries'.

### Meet other parents/carers

Meeting with other parents and carers whose children also have eczema, is a chance to share some of the challenges and successes, and can be another source of support.

Regional support groups are run by the [National Eczema Society](#).

## Looking after your emotional wellbeing

Some parents and carers turn to smoking, drinking or using drugs because they are feeling stressed or upset about their child's health. Others develop mental health problems, like anxiety or depression.

Addressing these issues quickly is really important. Even if you feel that this takes time away from your role as a parent or carer, it will benefit your family's welfare and happiness in the long term.

Support is available in Lambeth and Southwark (see links below) if you are concerned about your own wellbeing.

[Southwark Wellbeing](#)

[Hub Lambeth living well network](#)

Good advice and support to stop smoking is available on the [NHS website](#)

Talking therapies services for adults are also available in both boroughs. Parents and carers can refer themselves if they are concerned about having mental health issues.

[Talking therapies services for adults in Lambeth](#)

[Talking therapies services for adults in Southwark](#)

For parents and carers who already have experience of mental health problems, a range of courses supporting the personal journey towards recovery are available through the South London and Maudsley (SLaM)

[Recovery College](#)



## Looking after your family

A range of personal and social circumstances can have an impact on the health and wellbeing of children with health needs. Below is a list of community resources that are available to help with issues you and your family might be facing.

### Early Help

If you are having difficulties and need support, you can self-refer to **Early Help**. They provide support to children, young people and families at times of need, to resolve issues rapidly and effectively before the problem gets worse.

### Lambeth

[Early Help services in Lambeth](#)

**Phone** 020 7926 3100, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

**Phone** 020 7926 5555, Monday to Friday, 5pm to 9am, weekends and public holidays)

**Email** [helpandprotection@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:helpandprotection@lambeth.gov.uk)

### Southwark

[Family Early Help services in Southwark](#)

**Phone** duty manager 020 7525 1922

### Arranging childcare

Information on childcare support and different providers, as well as Children's Centres, is available directly through the council's website.

[Arranging childcare in Lambeth](#)

[Arranging childcare in Southwark](#)

### Other essentials

[PACT Baby Bank](#) (Southwark) provides support with practical items, including baby clothing, cots, buggies, and blankets.

**Phone** 020 7708 5465.

## Healthy eating

The [HENRY Healthy Families programme](#) provides support to parents of young children, for example improved nutrition, parenting skills, breastfeeding and getting more active.

To access group programmes

[email gst-tr.HVSupportAndDevelopmentWorker@nhs.net](mailto:gst-tr.HVSupportAndDevelopmentWorker@nhs.net) with your name, the child's name, the child's date of birth, your postcode, and phone number.

The [Food Flagship](#) programme in Lambeth is useful to help Lambeth residents develop a love of healthy and sustainable food. Information about healthy eating is also available on the [Southwark Council](#) website.

## Having enough food for your family

Sometimes, professionals seeing your child or working with your family can refer you to food banks in Lambeth and Southwark through a voucher scheme. This can depend on your circumstances, such as the age of your children.

[Lambeth Foodbank](#)

[Southwark Foodbank](#)

Other options include:

[Albrighton Community Fridge](#)

[Healthy Start](#) provide free fruit and vegetables, and items such as milk and vitamins.

[Alexandra Rose](#) provide vouchers for fruit and vegetables via children's centres to people eligible for the Healthy Start voucher scheme.

## Heating your home

The [Seasonal Health Intervention Network Initiative \(SHINE\)](#), is EU-backed, led by Islington Council and is delivered in Lambeth. Referrals are made by NHS and social care staff and other professionals.

Some of the interventions include:

- advice on saving energy and grants that are available for heating and insulation.
- support with bills and energy debt.
- benefit checks by the Welfare Rights Team.
- fire safety checks (from London Fire Brigade).
- home security checks (from the police).

The [Southwark Council](#) website also has advice on saving energy in your home. More general advice on energy saving can be found here: [Energy Saving Trust](#)

## Housing issues

The Southwark and Lambeth Council websites provide a range of information about housing.

[Lambeth housing advice](#)

[Southwark Together UK housing advice](#)

[Shelter](#) provide advice and support, and legal services, for poor housing and homelessness. [Emergency helpline](#) 0808 800 4444.



## Difficulties with paying bills

Free and impartial advice about improving your finances is available at [Money Helper](#). It has been set up by the Government to help prevent debt and provides advice on financial options if you are in debt.

Support through a range of difficult financial situations is available through these Council websites:

[Lambeth support services](#)

[Southwark support services](#)

## Other sources of support

[Citizens Advice](#). Advice on benefits, money, housing and more.

**Phone** 0800 144 8848

[Every Pound Counts](#). Benefits advice in Lambeth.

**Phone** 0800 254 0298

[National Debtline](#). Debt advice and support, **Phone** 0808 808 4000

[Step Change Debt Charity](#). Free debt advice, **Phone** 0800 138 1111

[UK Bill Help](#)

## Finding employment

There is a Lambeth Council initiative called [Opportunity Lambeth](#) that seeks to support local access to employment and opportunities, working with employers in the borough:

[Lambeth help getting a job](#)

[Lambeth Children's Centres](#) also offer support for parents in acquiring skills and finding employment.

Advice on finding employment is also available from [Southwark Council Employment Advice](#)

[Southwark Works](#) provides employment support, including access to training and help with CV writing, filling in job applications and interview techniques.

## Join in, and thrive in your community

### [The Mix](#)

Free life advice, including money, housing, health and relationships, for those under 25, **Phone** 0808 808 4994

### Home Start

Support and friendship for families from 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester of pregnancy to 5 years old.

[Home Start Lambeth](#), **Phone** 020 7924 9299

[Home Start Southwark](#), **Phone** 020 7737 7720

### Children's centres

Services include family support, support to get back to work, courses, stay and play, and child development information.

[Southwark](#)

[Lambeth](#)

### Local offer

For parents and young people, aged up to 25 years, with special education needs. Information about education, health, transport, leisure, housing, and wellbeing.

[Southwark](#)

[Lambeth](#)

### Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP)

Support and resources for families with babies and infants (aged up to 3), who live in the Coldharbour, Stockwell, Tulse Hill and Vassall wards of Lambeth.

[LEAP](#)

### Refer a friend in need

If you have found this information useful and know someone else who could benefit, please refer them to [our website](#) where they can receive their free Health check and Health support pack.

Other health support packs are also available for constipation, asthma and family health and wellbeing.

***Bridging gaps to help children and young people be healthy, happy, and well.***