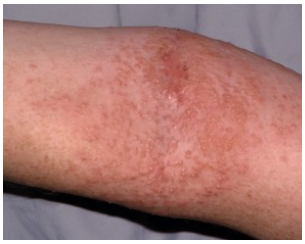
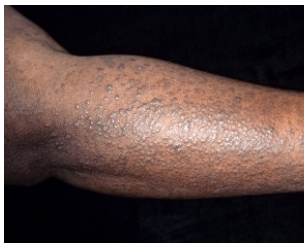
DOCTOR EDGES™
HAIR RESTORATION | DERMATOLOGY | AESTHETICS | WELLNESS

Eczema(atopic dermatitis)





Eczema (atopic dermatitis) is a chronic skin condition characterized by dry skin, itching, and a red, flaky rash exacerbated by scratching. It often occurs with other allergic conditions like asthma and hay fever, and is influenced by environmental factors like infections, heat, fragrances, and stress. While triggers can worsen symptoms, the primary cause is an overactive immune system, leading to inflammation, changes in skin bacteria, and skin barrier breaks, making individuals more prone to infections.

Who's At Risk

Infants and children are most frequently affected by eczema, although this condition may present for the first time in adulthood. Approximately one-third of children with eczema may have disease that persists into their adult years, and their skin lesions in adulthood may be different than what they experienced in childhood. There is no cure for eczema, and it is not contagious.

Signs & Symptoms

Eczema is usually itchy and presents as a skin rash on the body. The skin lesions are commonly red, scaly, and may appear to be more wrinkled than unaffected skin. The most common locations for eczema include the skin folds, such as on the face / eyelids, neck, wrists, hands / feet, inner elbows, behind the knees, and genitals. Adults with eczema may notice the most irritation on the extremities, but any part of the skin may be affected. Eczema skin lesions frequently come and go within days to weeks. It is normal for new areas of eczema to appear in various places on the body as other areas resolve.

Thickened, scaly papules (small, raised bumps) and plaques (areas of raised skin that are larger than a thumbnail and feel rough and flaky) are seen in affected skin areas, and the condition can be:

- Localized – A few scattered areas of involvement that are easily treated with self-care measures. Eczema of the hands and/or feet is a common example of localized disease.
- Moderate – More extensive involvement that is more difficult to control with self-care measures and may require topical or other prescription therapy.
- Severe – Widespread involvement that is too difficult to treat with topical prescription therapy and frequently requires the use of more aggressive prescription treatments to keep the skin clear.

Eczema affecting special skin sites, such as the face, scalp, genitals, hands, and feet, may require topical prescription or other aggressive treatments despite a very small amount of skin disease.

In lighter skin colors, affected areas may appear pink or red; however, in darker skin colors, the redness may be subtle or may even appear more purplish or darker brown.

Areas of eczema that become infected with a bacteria, virus, or fungus (known as a superimposed infection) can develop thick yellow-to-orange crusts, blisters, or open skin sores. Secondary skin infections are common in individuals with eczema.

Self-Care Guidelines

Maintaining healthy, moisturized skin is very important for those individuals who have eczema.

- Moisturizing daily skin-care routines with fragrance-free moisturizers are essential.
- Avoid long, hot showers. Hot water can dry out the skin, which worsens eczema.
- Hypoallergenic moisturizing soaps, such as unscented Dove, Vanicream bar soap, and Nature by Canus, are recommended.
- Thick moisturizing creams or ointments such as petroleum jelly, Aquaphor ointment, CeraVe healing ointment, CeraVe moisturizing cream, Cetaphil cream, Eucerin cream, and Aveeno cream should be applied to damp skin at least once daily, often after showers or baths.
- Treat red, itchy areas with over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream or ointment 0.5%-1% (eg, Cortaid, Cortisone-10) twice daily. To avoid thinning of the skin, do not use steroid creams for longer than 3 weeks continuously without a 1-week break in between.
- Attempt to minimize exposure to heat, low humidity, detergents / soaps, abrasive clothing, chemicals, smoke, environmental allergens (eg, trees and grasses), and stress.
- Fragrance-free household products and laundry detergent may also be beneficial.
- Keep the home from getting too dry by using a humidifier, especially in the bedroom.

When to Seek Medical Care

Seek medical care if there is a lack of response to self-care measures, if the condition worsens (flares), or if it involves special skin areas such as the face / eyelids, hands / feet, or genitals.

Also see a Doctor Edges board certified physician if you see areas of pus, large numbers of yellow crusty areas, or blisters as these may be signs of a secondary skin infection.

Not all red, scaly rashes on the body are eczema. Many other medical conditions can mimic eczema, such as psoriasis, fungal or other infections, medication reactions, allergic or irritant skin reactions, food allergies or nutritional deficiencies, and other autoimmune conditions. Your medical provider can help you determine the cause of your rash if it is unclear.