

Caring for your child's eczema

Eczema, also called atopic dermatitis, is a very common skin condition in children that usually starts in the first few months of life. It cannot be cured but can be managed well. Most children grow out of their eczema. To help keep your child's eczema under control, it is important to avoid aggravating factors where possible. These include:



over heating



bubble bath



prickly materials



grass, sand



over chlorinated pools

Daily skin care management

It is important to keep the skin well hydrated with regular moisturising even when there is no eczema seen on the skin. Moisturiser fills the gaps between the skin cells which reduces water loss from the skin and increases hydration. It also stops things like pollen, animal dander and foods getting through the skin. Follow these steps every day:

Bathing

1

Bath or shower once a day
(ensure the water is lukewarm). Bath oil can be added if the skin feels very dry or a soap free wash can be used in the shower.

2

Avoid soap products as these will dry the skin. Avoid bubble baths.

3

Keep it short
Try and keep baths and showers under five minutes.

Moisturising

- Moisturise at least once a day, more often if the skin is dry.
- It is best to apply moisturiser to the whole body and face straight after bathing or showering as this is when the moisturiser is best absorbed by the skin.
- Ointments and thick moisturisers are better than lotions as they are more hydrating and are less likely to sting.
- Moisturisers can be applied to the wet body after a bath or shower then pat dry. This can reduce the sensation of greasiness.
- Always remove moisturisers from the tub with a clean spoon or spatula and apply plenty to the whole body.



How to treat eczema

As soon as you see eczema on your child's skin (e.g. red, rough, itchy areas), follow these instructions:

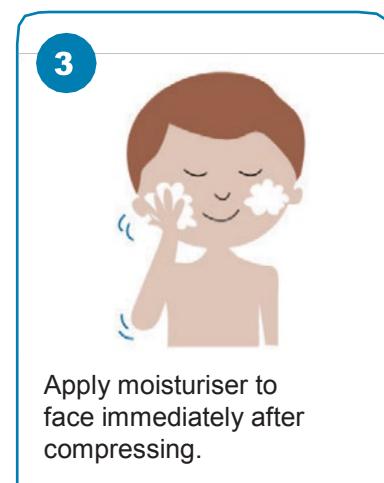
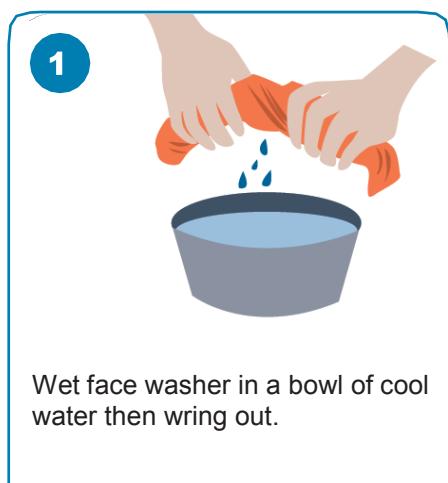
- Apply cortisone cream or ointment to all eczema areas as prescribed by your child's doctor or nurse practitioner. Ointments are more moisturising and will cause less stinging than cortisone creams.
- Apply moisturiser everywhere else on the face and body at least once a day (more often if the skin feels dry).
- If most areas of the skin are covered with eczema apply moisturiser immediately after bath or shower followed by cortisone cream or ointments as prescribed by your child's doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Continue to apply the cortisone cream or ointment to all the eczema areas until the eczema has completely gone and the skin feels soft.
- Start using them again if the eczema worsens and is itchy.

How to control the itch

- Do not over heat or over wrap your child; this can make the itch worse.
- Antihistamines will not help with the itch caused by eczema and are not usually recommended. Sometimes they can be given to improve your child's sleep at night but it is better to treat the eczema properly.
- Wet wraps and cool compresses can help ease the itch caused by eczema.

Cool compresses

Cool compresses are a wet dressing for the face. Cool compressing should be done as often as needed until the itch settles.



Specific recommendations for your child:

Wet dressings

Wet dressings are best applied at night before bed and usually help your child to sleep better. Wet dressings are usually applied every night until the eczema clears and then every second night for one week after to make sure the eczema settles. Your child's treating doctor or nurse practitioner will tell you how often the wet dressings should be done. How to apply your child's wet dressings:

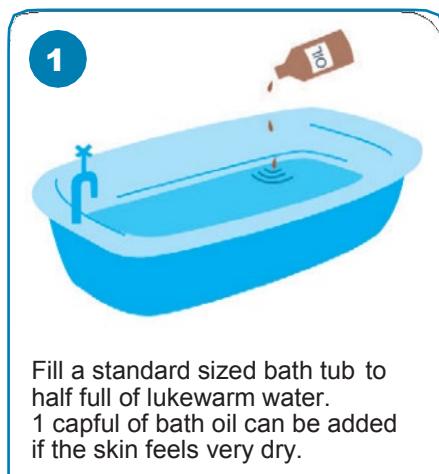


Specific
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your child:

Bleach baths

Eczema is prone to infection. Bleach baths help to treat children with infected eczema. Bleach baths are very safe. The final concentration of bleach when diluted in water is similar to chlorinated swimming pool water. Bleach baths are usually performed twice a week, but your child's treating doctor or nurse practitioner will advise you on this.

How to perform a dilute bleach bath:



Fill a standard sized bath tub to half full of lukewarm water.
1 capful of bath oil can be added if the skin feels very dry.



Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of White King bleach.
OR
Add 12mL of White King bleach to every 10L of water.



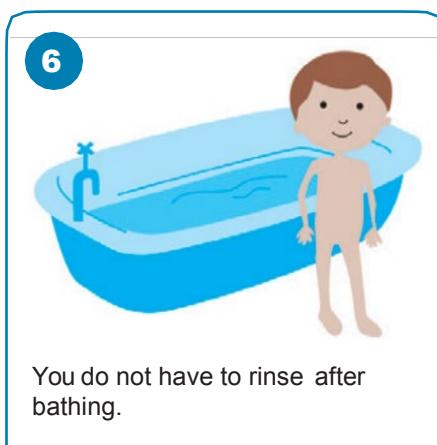
Wash the face and scalp while in the bath avoiding the eyes.



Gently wipe any crusts off the skin while in the bath.



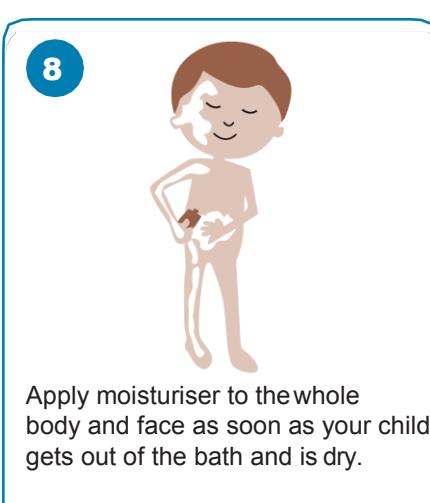
Your child can soak in the bath for up to ten minutes, no longer.



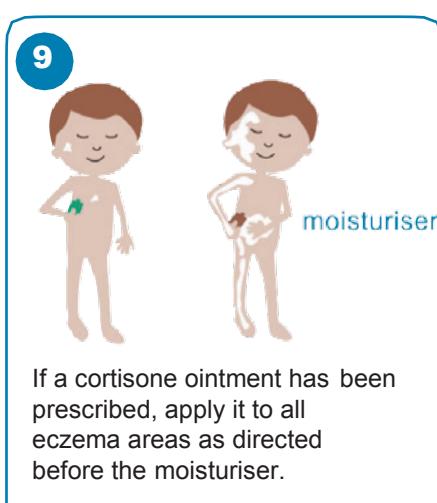
You do not have to rinse after bathing.



Use a fresh towel to pat the skin dry.



Apply moisturiser to the whole body and face as soon as your child gets out of the bath and is dry.



If a cortisone ointment has been prescribed, apply it to all eczema areas as directed before the moisturiser.

This document can be made available in alternative formats
on request for a person with a disability.

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Child and Adolescent Health Service

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