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Notes: **Nurses can write personalized notes to patients here.**

Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis)

Definition

Eczema (also called atopic dermatitis) is a chronic inflammation of the outer layers of the skin.

Causes

The exact cause of eczema is not known. Factors that may contribute to eczema include:

- Genetics
- Environment
- [Allergies](#)

Risk Factors

Eczema is more common in people of African or Asian descent.

Other factors that may increase the chances of eczema:

- A personal history of [asthma](#) or allergies
- Living in urban areas or places with low humidity
- A family history of eczema or allergic disorders
- Exposure to certain fabrics, perfumes in soaps, dust mites (common), or foods
- Stress, especially if it leads to scratching
- Frequent washing of affected areas
- Use of rubber gloves in persons sensitive to latex
- Scratching or rubbing of skin
- Medications that suppress the immune system
- Excess weight or [obesity](#)

Symptoms

Eczema symptoms vary from person to person. Scratching and rubbing can cause or worsen some of the symptoms. Symptoms include:

- Dry, itchy skin
- Cracks behind the ears or in other skin creases
- Red rashes on the cheeks, arms, and legs
- Red, scaly skin
- Thick, leathery skin
- Small, raised bumps on the skin
- Crusting, oozing, or cracking of the skin

Diagnosis

You will be asked about your symptoms and medical history. A physical exam will be done. The diagnosis is made by the appearance and location of the rash. You may be referred to specialist.

Treatment

The main goals of eczema treatments are to:

- Heal the skin and keep it healthy
- Stop the itching
- Prevent scratching or rubbing of the affected skin
- Avoid skin infection
- Prevent flare-ups
- Identify and avoid triggers

Treatment options may vary. Your doctor may recommend more than one depending on your condition. They include:

Skin Care

Proper skin care may allow the skin to heal. Treatment may include:

- Avoiding hot or long baths or showers. Keep them less than 15 minutes.
- Using mild, unscented bar soap or non-soap cleanser. Use it sparingly.
- Air-drying or gently pat drying after bathing. Apply gentle moisturizer when your skin is still damp.
- Treating skin infections right away.

Medications

In some cases, medications may be needed. Examples include:

- Prescription creams and ointments containing cortisone, tacrolimus, pimecrolimus, or crisabarole
- Prescription or over-the-counter antihistamines to help prevent itching
- Antibiotics applied directly to the skin or taken by mouth in order to treat infections
- Oral medications to reduce inflammation
- Monoclonal antibody injection to reduce inflammation

Phototherapy

If skin care and medications are not effective, light therapy may be used. This may include:

- Treatment with ultraviolet light

- Adding psoralen, a medication used to sensitize the skin for light therapy

Prevention

Eczema is difficult to prevent, especially if there is a family history.

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