

Atopic Dermatitis



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Lifestyle Changes to Help Prevent Eczema Flares

- **Moisturize Regularly:** Apply a thick, fragrance-free moisturizer at least twice daily, especially after bathing.
- **Take Short, Lukewarm Showers:** Limit showers to 5–10 minutes with lukewarm water to prevent drying out the skin. Pat skin dry gently and apply moisturizer.
- **Use Gentle Skin Care Products:** Choose mild, unscented soaps, shampoos, and laundry detergents.
- **Wear Soft, Breathable Fabrics:** Opt for loose-fitting cotton clothing. Avoid wool, rough fabrics, and tight clothing.
- **Manage Stress:** Practice stress-reduction techniques such as deep breathing, yoga, mindfulness, or regular physical activity.
- **Monitor for Allergens or Irritants:** Keep a diary to identify potential flare triggers like pollen, dust mites, pet dander, or certain foods.



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What is Atopic Dermatitis?

Atopic dermatitis (AD), or eczema, is a chronic skin condition that causes dry, itchy, and inflamed skin. AD is linked to a combination of genetic, immune, and environmental factors, often involving a weakened skin barrier that allows irritants and allergens to enter.

Flare-ups may be triggered by allergens, stress, climate changes, or irritants like soaps and fabrics. While not contagious, AD can affect sleep, self-esteem, and daily life.

There is no cure, but symptoms can be managed with daily moisturizers, avoiding triggers, and using treatments like topical steroids, calcineurin inhibitors, or biologics. With the right care, people with AD can lead healthy, active lives.

Signs & Symptoms

Atopic dermatitis typically causes dry, itchy, and inflamed skin. Common signs include red or brownish patches, thickened or scaly areas, and skin that may crack, ooze, or crust over. Itching is often intense and can lead to scratching, which worsens irritation.

Symptoms can appear on the hands, face, neck, elbows, and knees.

Diagnosis

Eczema is usually diagnosed through a physical exam and a review of symptoms and medical history. No specific test is needed, but doctors may use allergy testing or skin biopsies to rule out other conditions.

Treatment

Treatment for atopic dermatitis focuses on relieving symptoms, preventing flare-ups, and restoring the skin barrier. Daily use of fragrance-free moisturizers is essential to keep skin hydrated. During flare-ups, topical corticosteroids or calcineurin inhibitors may be prescribed to reduce inflammation and itching. For moderate to severe cases, newer options like biologic injections or oral medications may be recommended. Identifying and avoiding personal triggers—such as certain fabrics, soaps, allergens, or stress—is also key.

"Some of the hardest moments have been when my eczema flares up around my eyes or mouth. I've had times where my eyelids were so swollen I could barely open them, and I didn't want anyone to see me. When it's around my mouth, I get really self-conscious in conversations; it's hard not to feel like people are staring. Eczema can make you feel like you have to hide parts of yourself, even though it's something you can't control."

-Kimia



Coping & Support

The Canadian Skin Patient Alliance (CSPA) is committed to supporting people living with atopic dermatitis (AD) through education, advocacy, and community engagement. We offer reliable resources to help patients understand their condition, manage symptoms, and explore treatment options. Our materials are created with input from patients and experts to ensure they are clear, accurate, and helpful.

The CSPA also advocates for improved access to dermatological care and new therapies across Canada. We work to raise awareness of the challenges faced by people with AD and push for changes in healthcare policy. Through social media, webinars, and Skin magazine, we create a space for patients to share experiences, learn from others, and feel supported in their journey.

Resources

CSPA's Atopic Dermatitis Information Hub
- www.canadianskin.ca

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