

ECZEMA

WHAT IT IS

Eczema is the name given to a group of diseases that cause inflammation of the skin. It is also referred to as dermatitis.

Eczema is a common problem, and it is not contagious. While some children outgrow the condition, eczema cannot be cured. A Certified Dermatologist can provide a proper diagnosis and a treatment plan to manage eczema and control flare-ups.

CAUSES

Eczema can be genetic, or due to external contact exposure (both irritant or allergic in nature), where it is often then referred to as dermatitis.

TYPES OF ECZEMA

ATOPIC DERMATITIS

Atopic dermatitis is hereditary and the most common type of eczema. It is estimated that up to 17% of Canadians will suffer from atopic dermatitis at some point in their lives.

Atopic dermatitis almost always starts in infancy or before age five. It is characterized by itchy, inflamed skin, usually behind the knees, the inside of the elbows, and on the face, neck and hands.

CONTACT DERMATITIS

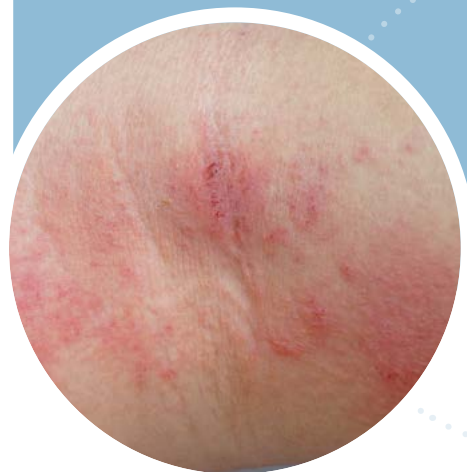
- **Allergic Contact Dermatitis (ACD)** is caused by a delayed immune reaction following skin contact with an allergenic substance. Poison ivy is the most common cause of ACD. Other common causes include metals like nickel, dyes, perfumes, and preservatives in cosmetics.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Inflamed or eczematous skin is red, itchy, bumpy and swollen sometimes with fluid-filled lesions that ooze and crust.

For people with skin of colour, eczema often appears “ashen” brown or grayish, rather than red.



- **Irritant Contact Dermatitis** is more common than ACD and is caused by repeated exposure to substances that chemically damage the skin, such as harsh soaps, detergents, solvents and cleaning products. Beauticians, nurses, bartenders, housekeepers and others who spend lots of time with wet hands often develop this form of dermatitis.
- **Other types include:** Dyshidrotic eczema, lichen simplex chronicus, nummular eczema, seborrheic eczema, stasis dermatitis, eczema herpeticum, papular eczema and eczema with follicular prominence.



TRIGGERS

Flare-ups of eczema are common. While attempts should be made to identify and avoid the triggers that cause these flares, they can occur despite strict trigger avoidance and diligent skin care.

Atopic dermatitis can worsen with exposure to allergens and irritants. Avoid the common ones, such as perfume and fragranced personal care products. This includes natural fragrances and essential oils, dust, animal dander, smoke and grass.

Allergic contact dermatitis is diagnosed with an allergy testing procedure known as 'patch testing'.

DO:

- Use mild, fragrance-free detergents to wash clothing, with no bleach or fabric softener
- Double-rinse clothing
- Moisturize often, especially in colder weather
- Choose cotton for bed linens and clothing
- Reduce stress as much as possible

DON'T:

- Expose skin to very hot or very cold water
- Expose skin to excessive heat or low humidity
- Dress in synthetic fabrics or wear wool next to the skin
- Use harsh detergents or perfumed products

TREATMENT

Treatment is important because it can prevent eczema from getting worse and relieve the pain and itching. The proper treatment can also reduce stress, prevent infections, and prevent skin thickening, which can lead to constant itching.

Most types of eczema require a combination of treatments and medications. Your dermatologist will choose the ones that will work the best to control your condition.

The three main steps of eczema management involve:

- 1 Bathing and moisturizing to repair skin
- 2 Medications to reduce inflammation
- 3 Avoiding triggers that cause flare-ups



Additional information on Eczema is available online.

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