



Atopic Dermatitis

Information for patients

Eczema, or atopic dermatitis, is a chronic skin condition that causing dry, itchy, scaly, red skin. It can affect infants, children, and adults and tends to be more common in certain families. Eczema is typically treated with moisturizers and prescription ointments.

Causes of eczema:

In patients with eczema, there is an abnormality in the outer layer of the skin making it more permeable than it should be. The skin loses moisture more easily, becoming dry, easily irritated, and hypersensitive. The skin is also more prone to infection. Eczema is thought to be caused by a combination of environmental and genetic factors. People with a family history of eczema are at increased risk. Allergies and asthma may be present more frequently in individuals with atopic dermatitis, but they are not the cause of eczema. Infrequently, eating a particular food may make eczema worse, but it is usually not the cause of the eczema. If you think your child might have a food allergy, you should consult an allergy specialist for evaluation.

Eczema symptoms:

Itching, small bumps and patches of redness, and skin flaking are common. Scratching can make the skin thickened/darkened and worsen the itching. Eczema symptoms vary from one person to another and can change over time. Scratching can also lead to infection of the skin. Signs of infection include pain, redness, and swelling.

Eczema diagnosis:

There is no specific blood test used to diagnose eczema. The diagnosis is based upon your medical history, symptoms, and physical examination. Factors that strongly suggest eczema include long-term and recurrent itching, symptoms that began at a young age, and a personal or family history of certain allergic conditions (including asthma, seasonal allergies as well as eczema).



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