

## How to Care for your Child's Eczema

### **What is eczema?**

Eczema is an inflammatory skin disorder that affects approximately 5-20% of children in America. The hallmark features of eczema are dry, itchy patches of skin. The most common areas of the body where we find eczema are the cheeks and chest of infants, and the elbows and knees of older children.

### **How do I manage my child's eczema?**

*Avoid exacerbating factors:* There are many facets of the environment that can exacerbate your child's eczema. Try to avoid excessive bathing without moisturization; along those lines, hot water can also lead to exacerbations. It is important to avoid low humidity environments (i.e. in the winter when your heater is on it is important to put a humidifier in your child's room). Certain chemicals, such as chlorine, can also dry your child's skin out; be sure to rinse and moisturize your child immediately after swimming in a pool. A small portion of children with have an allergic trigger.

*Moisturizers:* This is the hallmark of eczema care. Frequent use (2-3 times daily) of a thick, non scented moisturizer is key. Typically creams are more readily absorbed than lotions (i.e. creams found in jars, as opposed to pump bottles). Below are a few brands which tend to be recommended by dermatologists:

Cerave

Cetaphil

Eucerin

Thick emollients such as Vaseline and Aquaphor are another good tool to use, especially for thick patches of eczema. Using Vaseline or Aquaphor as a barrier over your child's moisturizer will help to prevent irritation from contact dermatitis and help lock moisture in.

*Soaps:* It is important to keep your soaps non-scented. Even soaps, such as Johnson & Johnson, which are marketed as gentle may exacerbate eczema due to their scent. Below are a few brands which tend to be recommended by dermatologists:

Aquaphor Baby Gentle Wash & Shampoo

Cerave Baby Wash & Shampoo

*Laundry Detergents:* Hypoallergenic detergents are best for children with eczema. Remember this may also mean washing the rest of your family's clothes, towels, etc with these hypoallergenic detergents, as your baby is often being held against your clothes. Try these detergents:

Dreft Laundry Detergent

All Laundry Detergent

*Medications:* When your child has an exacerbation and the previous measures don't work, your pediatrician may recommend using a steroid cream, ointment, or oil. Sometimes we will start with over the counter hydrocortisone, although sometimes your child may require prescription strength. It is important to use the steroid for the duration prescribed in order to effectively treat your child's flare, and to prevent frequent, recurrent exacerbations; therefore frequent use of steroids. Steroids are safe to use on your child, as long as they are used properly and as directed!