



ECZEMA

The medical term for “eczema” is Atopic Dermatitis (AD). AD is an inflammation of the skin which may cause dryness, flakiness, thickening, heat, burning, stinging, and probably most importantly, itching. The cause of AD is unknown. AD flares can be triggered by a number of different factors. The result may be just a small patch of dry skin, or total body involvement.

Symptoms

Whatever triggers your AD, it leads to itching and redness, and may make the skin dry and flaky. Sometimes, itchy blisters form. When these burst, or when scratching damages the skin, the surface may be left moist and crusty.

The problem is usually worse in the folds of the skin where your limbs bend. The itch is intense, and makes you want to scratch, and scratching only makes the symptoms worse. People say that if you have to do anything, gentle rubbing, with the flat of your hands, is better than scratching. Whatever the cause of your AD, the skin is more sensitive, and you may not tolerate perfumes, cosmetics, soaps, detergents, etc.

Triggers

Possible AD triggers include: flare-ups of asthma or environmental allergies, putting on taking off your clothes, the changing of the seasons, going indoors and outdoors, drying off from the shower or swimming, lip licking, getting in and out of air-conditioned houses or automobiles, frequent hand or body washing, dishwashing, cooking, swimming, sweating, contact with substances which irritate the skin chemically such as detergents, soaps, diesel or engine oils, strong chemicals, cleaners etc., and contact with substances to which the body has become allergic.

Treatment

There is no cure for AD. It involves a sensitivity of the skin that you are likely to have to some degree forever. The good news is that there are a number of approaches which help to minimize your symptoms.

The mainstay of treatment is moisturizing the skin. For this we use shower or bathtub soaks which help to replenish the skin’s water content. Washing and scrubbing with soaps will dry out the skin and make AD worse. It helps to use a nonirritating soap substitute. Nonmedicated moisturizing creams are applied after soaking.

Your doctor may prescribe a cream or ointment containing a topical steroid. These creams are very safe when used as instructed by your provider. Antihistamines taken by mouth may be helpful in reducing the itch.

If the skin becomes infected, which is more likely because its normal protective surface has been damaged, your doctor will prescribe antibiotics.

Systemic cortisone in the form of pills or shots may be necessary.

Naturally, if your eczema is a result of a specific allergy or sensitivity, then it is wise to avoid the thing which causes it if you can.

Use your treatments according to the instructions from your provider.

At the Polley Clinic, we can help. The treatments and prescriptions used to treat AD are best prescribed by a specialist. Make an appointment as soon as possible.