

Eczema

Eczema is a **chronic inflammatory, relapsing, non-contagious** and **extremely itchy** skin condition. Children with eczema often scratch themselves throughout the night and have disturbed sleep. Common skin changes during a flare include redness, swelling, oozing and scaly. In chronic eczema patients have thickened skin with exaggerated skin markings (“skin that looks like that of an elephant”).

Eczema may appear anywhere on the body but distribution often varies in different age groups:

- ✓ babies commonly have it on the scalp and face (especially cheeks and chin *without affecting the nose*),
- ✓ children at the back of knees and front of elbows
- ✓ adults commonly on hands, neck and face.

Eczema triggers include:

- *chemical irritants*: soap, shampoo, bubble bath, shower gel, soap, detergents.
- *mechanical irritants*: irritating fabrics, e.g. wool
- *environmental allergens*: house dust mite, pet dander, pollen
- *contact allergen*: fragrances and preservatives in cosmetics, nickel in jewellery or belts, latex, component in rubber e.g. shoes.
- *foods*
- *skin infection*
- *stress*

Not all patients with AE will have identifiable triggering factors

Eczema usually starts during infancy but in adults, certain exposure especially at work can trigger eczema.

Children may outgrow eczema, although some will continue to experience it in adulthood.

Treatment includes topical medication and in severe patients, medications to suppress the immune system, phototherapy or biologic medication as injection.

Eczema affects quality of life and may result in depression, anxiety and other psychological or social problems.

There are different types of eczema, make an appointment to determine the type of eczema you have. Dr Mabelane will help you with your own eczema management plan.