

Your Child's Skin



For more information please contact:
The Children's Allergy and Asthma Education Centre,
Children's Hospital, Health Sciences Centre
at 1-888-554-1141 or visit www.caaec.ca



Why Do We Have Skin?



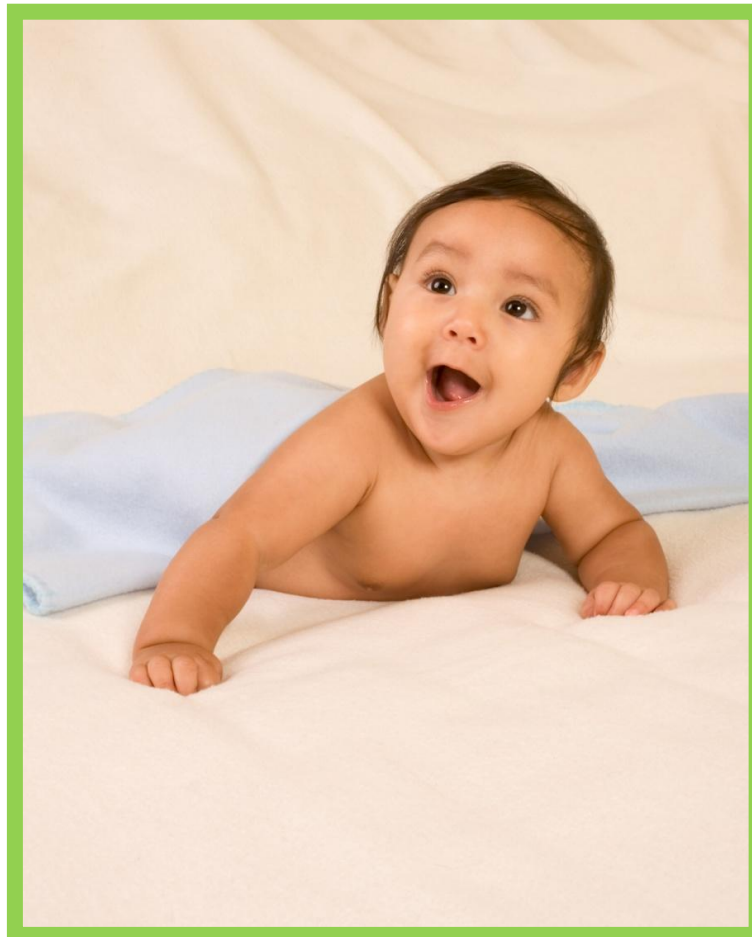
Why Do We Have Skin?

Ask the participants: Why do we have skin?

Answer:

- Skin protects our body. It acts as a barrier to keep germs/bacteria and other potentially harmful substances out of our body.
- Skin helps us learn and identify good things versus harmful things, such as learning that “hot” is dangerous and “soft” is nice.
- Skin helps keep our body temperature normal – we sweat through our skin to stay cool.
- Skin helps us get the vitamin D we need since it is absorbed through skin.

What Does “Healthy” Skin Look and Feel Like?



What Does “Healthy” Skin Look and Feel Like?

Ask the participants: What does “healthy” skin look and feel like?

Answer:

- Healthy skin is soft, although it may be dry in winter
- Skin may be different colours, based on heredity but is usually the same throughout the body.
- Soles of feet and hands are often lighter.
- Skin may have freckles or blemishes.

Common Skin Conditions



Common Skin Conditions

Ask the participants:

Look at this photo. Do you know what this condition is called?

Answer:

- This is a condition called Sebaceous Gland Hyperplasia.
- It is sometimes called “baby acne”
- We can see several white or yellow papules or pimples.
- It is usually seen on the cheeks, upper lips and forehead.
- This happens in about 50% of newborns.
- It is related to the mom’s hormones and appears after birth.
- This is part of normal newborn skin.

Treatment:

- No treatment is required, simply wash with water.
- Usually goes away on its own by 3-4 months of age

Common Skin Conditions



Common Skin Conditions

Ask the participants: Look at this child's back. What do you think this is?

Answer:

- This is called urticaria. A more common name is “hives”.
- It is a red, flat or bumpy rash. It may be itchy and can be anywhere on the body.
- It can happen in babies, children or adults.
- Hives often start slowly. One blotch in the morning, a few more as the day goes on.
- The most common cause is a viral infection. For example, a baby might be fighting a cold and in a few days develop this type of rash. It is the body's reaction to the virus.
- It is not dangerous and does not necessarily mean an allergy.

Treatment

- Occasional hives on isolated parts of the body are not a cause for concern and usually go away on their own.
- Parents can give children antihistamine medication if the hives are very itchy and bothersome.
- Hives that occur more often and cover the body should be discussed with a health care professional.

Hives and antibiotics

- Hives can happen after or while taking antibiotics.
- If this occurs, stop the medication and consult a doctor right away.

Hives and certain foods

- If a rash happens very quickly (within minutes) of eating a food, your child should be seen by a health care professional immediately.

Common Skin Conditions



Common Skin Conditions

Ask the participants: What do you think this is?

Answer:

- This is normal dry skin.
- Dry skin is often seen in newborns but older children and adults can also have dry itchy skin.
- It is most common in the winter months.

Treatment: Use moisturizers daily, drink lots of fluids, wear non-irritating cotton clothing.

Common Skin Conditions



Common Skin Conditions

Ask the participants: What do you think this is?

Answer:

- These are called Mongolian spots.
- Infants may be born with one or more Mongolian spots. They are often on the buttocks but can also be on the baby's back.
- They often appear on babies with darker skin.
- They are flat and grey blue in color, often looking like a bruise.
- They are usually there at birth but fade away by school age.
- The skin feels normal even if it's a different color.

Eczema

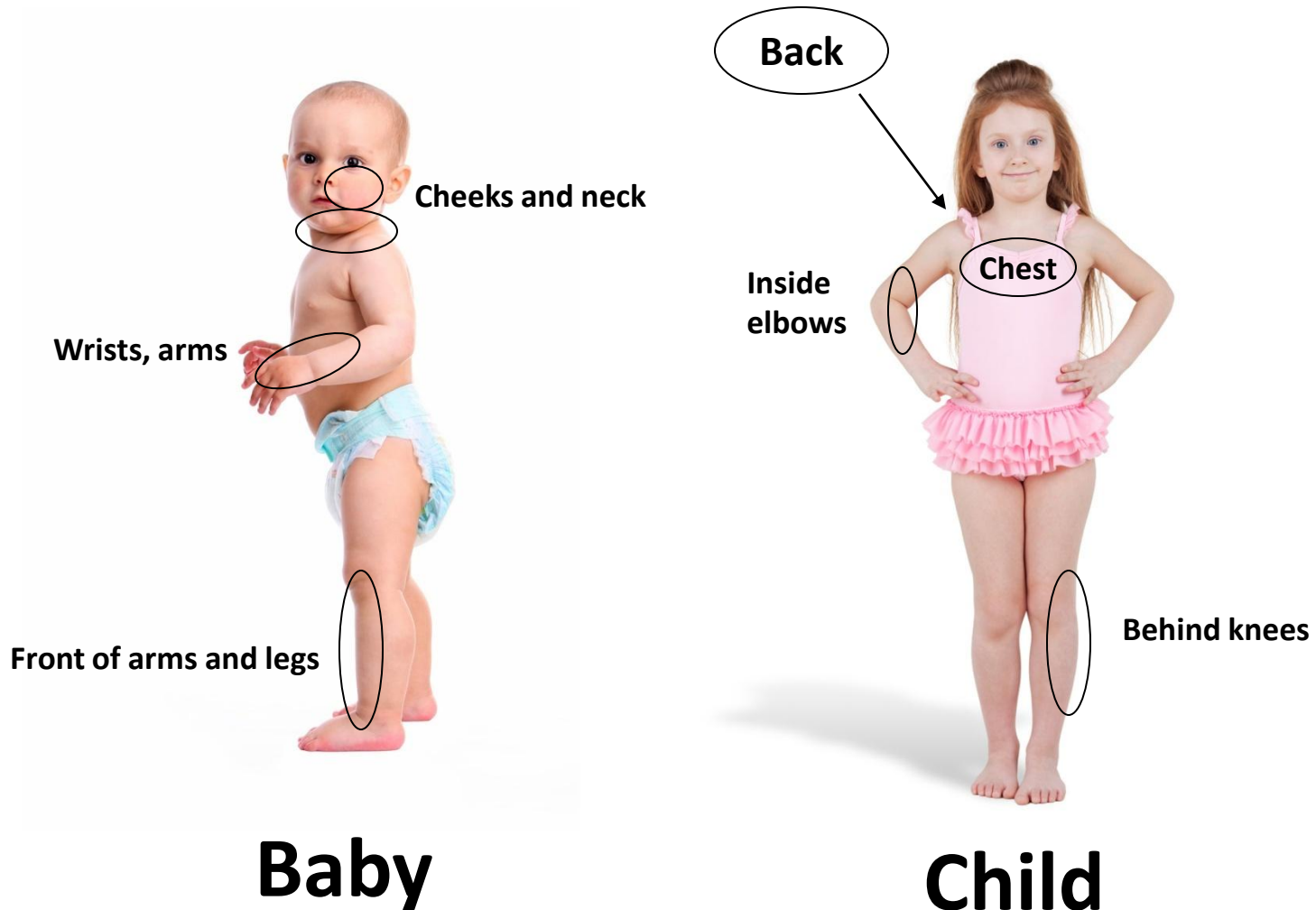


Eczema

Many of you might have already heard of a skin condition called “eczema”. The photos you are seeing are examples of what it can look like.

- Atopic dermatitis, more commonly called “eczema” is a skin condition that causes the skin to become red, swollen and very itchy.
- The rash has dry, red, patchy or cracked skin.
- Sometimes the skin weeps a watery fluid.
- Skin gets rough, "leathery," thick.
- Eczema is a chronic skin condition. Chronic means eczema can get better and get worse but it is always there at least a bit.
- 10-20% of children in Canada have eczema.
- Eczema can run in families. If a parent has eczema or another allergic condition (asthma, hay fever or food allergy), the child has a greater chance of having eczema and other allergic conditions. The chances are even greater if both parents have eczema or allergies.

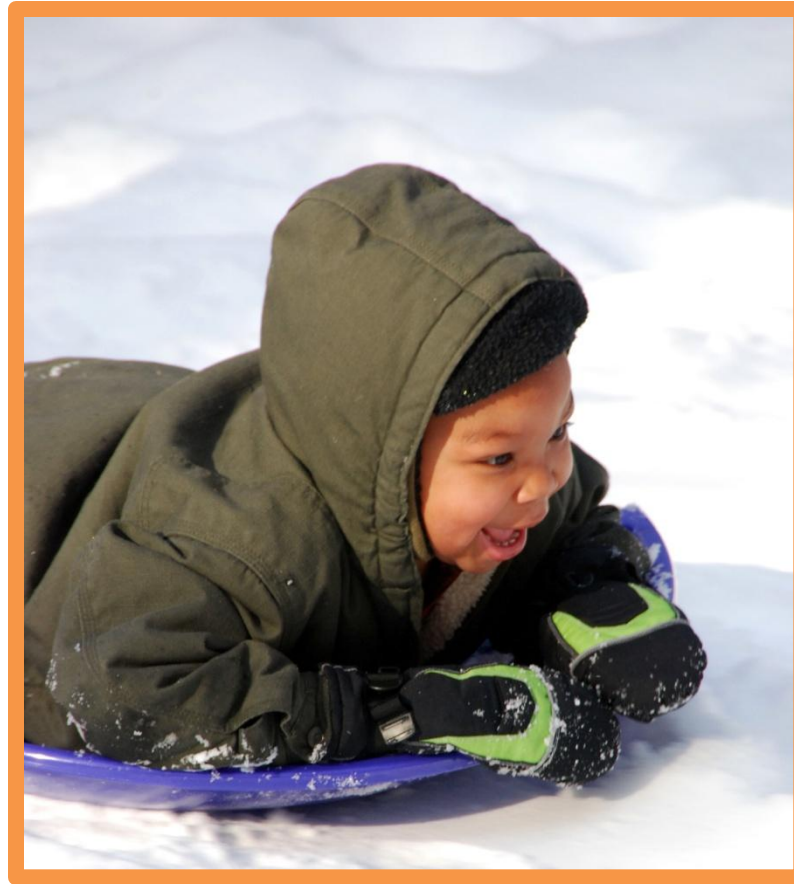
Common Locations of Eczema



Common Locations of Eczema

- Eczema almost always starts before age 1 year.
- **In babies**, eczema is usually found in areas the baby can reach – cheeks, neck, arms, wrist, outside of arms and legs.
- **In older children**, eczema is more commonly seen on the back, chest, behind the knees and on the inside of the elbows.
- Eczema usually gets better by age 5.
- Children have a 40% chance of outgrowing eczema by the time they become adults.
- Because eczema is so itchy, it greatly impacts a child's quality of life – sleep being the most affected. Uncontrolled eczema can cause irritability, discomfort and can even cause infection.

True or False?



Dry itchy skin in the winter is eczema.

True or False?

Ask the participants: “True or False? Dry itchy skin in the winter is eczema.”

Answer:

- **The answer is FALSE.** Canadian winters are very dry. Our skin can also get very dry and itchy.
- Dry skin due to dry winter air is usually all over the body.
- Skin tends to be flaky and the dryness goes away when a moisturizing cream is applied.
- The skin does not get red or swollen.

True or False?

**Eczema is
caused by the
food a baby
eats.**



True or False?

Ask the participants: “True or False? Eczema is caused by the food the baby eats.”

Answer: The answer is True AND False.

- Most times, eczema is not caused by the food the baby has eaten. Parents will sometimes try to stop feeding the child foods from important food groups (like milk) to try to make the eczema better.
- Sometimes this works but it can also be dangerous for the baby because it removes important food from their diet. Often, the food is not the cause of the eczema. Parents should always talk to the health care professional before making any changes to the baby's diet.
- Eczema is often the first sign that a baby is going to have allergies either to foods or things in the air. Taking good care of the skin and controlling eczema is important as it helps the baby be more comfortable and might help prevent allergies.

Ask the participants: How would you know if a food is making eczema worse?

- Sometimes a baby reacts to a food immediately after eating it. Other times, symptoms develop within hours or eczema worsens later in the day or the next day.
- Itching and scratching may worsen shortly after eating the trigger food.
- If you suspect a food is making eczema symptoms worse, see a health care professional. You may be asked to keep a food diary for 4-6 weeks.

What Makes Eczema Worse?



What Makes Eczema Worse?

Eczema flare-ups are common and can occur for no obvious reason but some flare-ups do have a trigger.

Here are some things that could make your child's skin worse:

- ❑ **Soaps and detergents:** Soaps and detergents remove the natural oils from the skin. This tends to make the skin dry and itchy and more sensitive to irritants.
- ❑ **Clothing:** Some fabrics rub against the skin and are very irritating to already red, irritated skin. Fabrics to avoid are wool and rough synthetic fabrics. Cotton clothing is the best.
- ❑ **Temperature:** Avoid getting too hot or too cold. Extremes of temperature may trigger a flare-up of eczema symptoms.
- ❑ **Habitual scratching:** They say that eczema is “an itch that rashes”. The more a child scratches, the worse the eczema becomes. This is called the “itch-scratch cycle”. It is important for parents to do everything they can to help stop the itchiness of their child's eczema.
- ❑ **Infection:** Infection, often introduced by scratching, can aggravate eczema.
- ❑ **Allergies:** Sometimes allergies to things in the air such as dust mites or pets can worsen eczema. An allergy doctor can help identify if allergies are a problem.
- ❑ **Food:** We have already discussed that sometimes food is a problem but most of the time, eczema is not related to food.

Looking After Eczema

- ✓ Keep the Skin Moist
- ✓ Prevent Scratching



Looking After Eczema

Dry skin makes your child's eczema itchy and scratching itchy skin makes eczema worse .

To help avoid this "itch-scratch cycle" it is important to keep your child's skin moist and to try to prevent scratching.

To keep skin moist:

- ✓ Give short baths (10-15 minutes) in lukewarm water every day.
- ✓ Use as little soap as possible or use only mild unscented soap when needed (Dove is a good choice).
- ✓ After the bath, gently pat the skin dry.
- ✓ Use an unscented moisturizer that does not contain alcohol immediately after a bath.
- ✓ Dress child in light cotton clothing .
- ✓ Apply moisturizer over entire body **several times per day**.

To help prevent scratching:

- ✓ Your child's health care professional might prescribe medicated creams and/or an antihistamine to use at night. This can help decrease the itch and help the child sleep.
- ✓ Follow your health care professional instructions and use the medicated creams and the antihistamines only as prescribed.
- ✓ Consider putting cotton gloves, socks or mittens on your child's hands at night if they tend to scratch in their sleep.
- ✓ Keep your child's fingernails cut short so that any scratching is less sharp and severe.
- ✓ If a child needs to relieve an itch, rub with fingers rather than scratch with nails.

Avoid Eczema Triggers



**Detergents
& Soaps**



Clothing



Sweat

**Eczema
Triggers**



**Change in
Temperature**



Allergens



Stress

Avoid Eczema Triggers

Along with doing all we can to keep moisture in the skin, it is also very important to avoid things that irritate the skin and make eczema worse. This page shows pictures of some things that irritate the skin. Lets talk about those that would bother a child the most:

❖ **Soaps and detergents:** avoid soap when bathing as much as possible.

- If soap is needed, use a mild unscented soap such as DOVE.
- Laundry soap can also be bothersome. Use a scent free laundry soap, use as little as possible, and double rinse the clothes after they are washed.
- DO NOT use fabric softener in the washer or the dryer.

❖ **Clothing:**

- Avoid synthetic clothing like polyesters .
- Avoid pure wool against the skin.
- Best to buy used cotton clothing that is soft and free of dyes.

❖ **Overheating:**

- Being hot and sweating tends to aggravate the skin
- Keep the child's bedroom cool at night.

❖ **Allergens:** Sometimes allergies play a role. For small children, allergies to dust mites or pets are the most common.

- An allergist can test for allergies and suggest how to avoid them.

❖ **Stress:** Stress is associated with eczema but it is not fully understood how it affects the condition. Some people with eczema have worse symptoms when they are stressed. For others, their eczema symptoms, like constant scratching, can cause them to feel stressed.

- Making sure a baby's environment is safe and their needs are met will help keep a baby calm.

❖ **Food:** As mentioned before, sometimes food worsens eczema.

- A parent who suspects food is a problem should talk to the doctor before stopping that food to be sure the baby is getting the nutrients they need to grow well.

Remember...

- ❖ Healthy skin acts as a barrier.
- ❖ Some skin conditions are normal.
- ❖ Eczema causes skin to be red, swollen and itchy
- ❖ If your child has eczema:
 - ✓ Keep the skin moist.
 - ✓ Avoid things that make the skin worse.
 - ✓ Use prescribed medicines as instructed.
 - ✓ Talk to a health care professional before making changes to your child's diet.



Key Messages to Remember

- ❖ Healthy skin acts as a barrier. It keeps germs and bacteria out of the body, helps keep our body temperature normal, and helps us absorb vitamin D.
- ❖ Some skin conditions are normal and resolve on their own such as baby acne and Mongolian spots.
- ❖ Eczema is a chronic skin condition that causes skin to be red, swollen and itchy.
- ❖ If your child has eczema:
 - Keep the skin moist – bathe daily and use LOTS of moisturizer.
 - Avoid things that make the skin worse such as soaps, fabric softener and synthetic fabrics.
 - Use prescribed medicines as instructed.
 - Talk to a health care professional before making changes to your child's diet.

Where Can I Get Help?

“Your Child’s Skin”

has been developed and produced in partnership by
Healthy Child Manitoba and The Children’s Allergy and Asthma Education Centre.

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