

## Eczema ABC

### **A – Avoid soaps**

This includes all soaps (even “simple” soap), shower gels, bubble bath, shampoo (particularly shampooing hair in the bath), washing up liquid and anything else that makes bubbles.

Instead of soap, you should use a soap substitute. You can use any moisturiser as a soap substitute, or a special product.

I suggest you try \_\_\_\_\_

### **B – Bland moisturisers**

In eczema, the skin barrier is not functioning normally, and moisturising the skin will help to improve the barrier function. You should apply moisturiser as often as you can – if the eczema is bad, this may be 4 or 5 times a day; if it is good, then once or twice a day is fine. People with a tendency to eczema will have fewer problems if they use a moisturiser every day, even when the skin is good.

Always apply moisturiser by smoothing it on, in the direction of the hairs (to avoid blocking up the hair follicles), and you do not need to rub it in completely. If it looks white, just wait a few minutes and it will soon melt into the skin.

There is no need to use bath oils (which just make things slippery), so long as you always apply moisturiser immediately after getting out of the bath.

The best moisturiser is the one that you will use – I would suggest trying \_\_\_\_\_

### **C- Control inflammation**

This is usually done with steroid creams or ointments. We use lower strengths on the face and in the flexures (skin creases) than on other body areas. Steroid creams are very safe, so long as you follow the instructions and only use them on the areas stated.

Many people worry about using steroids on their skin or their children's skin. We know that if we do not treat the inflammation, the eczema gets worse and the barrier function gets worse, even with plenty of moisturisers. If we do not use topical steroids then we may end up making the eczema worse in the long run. If you are concerned about the use of topical steroids, please speak to me about it.

You should not apply moisturiser and steroid at the same time – you need to wait half an hour for one to soak in before you use the other. If the eczema is bad then I would suggest using the steroid first; as it calms down then you can switch to using the moisturiser first. For maintenance (see below), you should always apply the moisturiser first.

Your steroid is

For the face: \_\_\_\_\_

For the body: \_\_\_\_\_

## Frequently asked questions

### **How much steroid to use?**

One fingertip unit (about 2.5cm or an inch squeezed out of the tube) will cover an area the size of a double handprint. The leaflet with this explains this in more detail.

### **How often to use it?**

Once a day is sufficient

### **How long to use it for?**

On the face: For a flare on the face, you can use hydrocortisone (MILD potency) daily for up to a week. You can then use it once or twice a week for a further 6 weeks if needed.

We sometimes use eumovate (MODERATE potency) on the face for up to 4 days, and then step down to hydrocortisone twice a week for up to 6 weeks if needed.

On the body: We usually use betnovate (POTENT) or elocon (POTENT) daily for up to 2 weeks, then, step down to twice a week for up to 6 months if needed.

On the hands or feet: We usually use dermovate (VERY POTENT) daily for up to 2 weeks, then step down to twice a week for up to six months. Please be careful with dermovate not to get it on your face or other body areas, as it is very strong and can cause a rash, particularly on the face.

**If you find you need to use more topical steroid than this, please come and see Dr Whybrew for a review.** If you have more than 1 flare in 3 months, or if you have trouble stepping down to the maintenance dose of once or twice a week, then we can use a different type of cream altogether. If this is the case, please try to see Dr Whybrew.

### **What are the different steroids?**

The mildest we use is 1% hydrocortisone (MILD) \*note – this is NOT the same as hydrocortisone butyrate, which is potent. Also, 0.5% hydrocortisone is actually the same potency as 1% due to the cream it is mixed with in the tube.

The next step up is eumovate (MODERATE potency), or betnovate RD (RD stands for ready diluted). These are about 2.5 times stronger than hydrocortisone

The next step up is betnovate (POTENT), elocon (POTENT) and they are about 10 times stronger than hydrocortisone

The next step up is dermovate (VERY POTENT) which is about 20 times stronger than hydrocortisone