

Top tips for controlling eczema:

1. Moisturise, moisturise, moisturise

Apply a cream, lotion, ointment, or oil regularly to moisturize your skin, at least three times a day. Avoid moisturizers with fragrances. In general the fewer the ingredients, the better.

2. Avoid products and activities that dry out your skin

Soaps and shampoos tend to dry the skin. Use a soft, hypoallergenic soap such as Cataphyll or one of its generic equivalents. Avoid shampoos and conditioners with added fragrances. Avoid long, hot baths or showers as it dries the skin, use lukewarm water instead. Stay out of the hot tub and the Jacuzzi, or, if you really have to relax in one, limit your time and immediately apply a moisturizer upon exiting. Some eczema sufferers find that chlorine, which is drying, worsens their eczema, but others find it has the advantage of killing bacteria on the skin and actually improves their eczema. Obviously, if you have a strong negative reaction to chlorine, you should avoid swimming in chlorinated pools. If not, feel free to swim; just rinse off when you're done with the pool for the day and apply a moisturizer while your skin is still wet. If you have open cracks from your eczema, it's a good idea to avoid swimming in lakes, rivers, ponds, and the ocean, as these can contain bacteria that lead to skin infections in the already immunity-compromised eczema sufferer.

3. Avoid known triggers

While allergies may not directly cause eczema, they can certainly exacerbate it. Common food allergies in eczema sufferers include soy, milk, and eggs. Common environmental allergens include dust mites, trees, grass, and mould. Certainly eczema sufferers should avoid known allergens as much as possible, but don't expect the removal of an allergen to be a cure-all. The causes of eczema are complex, and it is often difficult or impossible to eradicate certain allergens completely from your environment.

4. Keep your hands clean and your nails trimmed

Scratching can lead to infection, especially if your hands aren't clean. Trim your nails and clean under them regularly. Because eczema frequently breaks out on hands, hand washing may be uncomfortable and you may be loath to do it regularly, but it's important you do so. Just make sure you avoid drying soaps and put an ointment on after washing to prevent them from drying out.

5. Wet your skin before applying lotions, ointments, or creams

Your skin needs to be damp to ensure that you are sealing in moisture that will soften the skin. Pat dry after a bath or shower and apply an emollient, within three minutes of exiting the water.

6. Minimize your itch

The more you scratch, the more you rash. You can minimize your itch with emollients and taking antihistamines.