Written by Professor Hywel Williams, Dr Ruth Murphy, Dr Jane Ravenscroft, Nurse Consultant Sandra Lawton and parents on behalf of the Nottingham Support Group for Carers of Children with Eczema

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feel you want to use a shampoo, find one that claims to be suitable for eczema. If you use a shampoo when
showering, try not to let it run on to the body. Another way to avoid shampoo running onto the body is to lean over
an empty bath and wash the hair using a shower head there so that all the suds run off into the bath rather than
onto your skin.

- **Oat baths**
  These are used to reduce itching. Put porridge oats in an old sock, and hang it on tap as filling the bath to allow
water to run through.

- **Prescribed emollient bath oil additives**
  Several emollient bath oil additives are available. Which are poured into the bath. There is not good evidence that
they do much more than directly applying an emollient to the skin when getting out of the bath, but if you are
already using them and your child likes them, then it is OK to stick with them. Some of these bath oils also contain
additional ingredients specifically for itching and infection. The amounts added to the bath should be used as
directed and not tipped in without measuring as too much of the added ingredients may irritate rather than help the
skin. Emollients can all make the bath or shower slippery, so always use a non-slip bath mat.

- **Bath treatments**
  There are specific bath treatments that are used occasionally for eczema treatment. These should only be used with
the guidance of your doctor. Examples are salt baths (using sea salt at about the concentration found in sea water
which is 20 fluid ounce jug of sea salt per 3 gallon bucket of water) or bleach baths: dilute bleach baths (a small capful
of regular sodium hypochlorite unconcentrated bleach mixed thoroughly in a normal sized plumbed –in bath) can
help to decrease skin infections and reduce the need for antibiotics in people with more sever eczema complicated
by lots of infections. Further information on Bleach bath therapy [http://www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/diseases-and-
treatments/a---d/atopic-dermatitis/eczema-bleach-bath-therapy](http://www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/diseases-and-
treatments/a---d/atopic-dermatitis/eczema-bleach-bath-therapy)

**Frequency**
This is one of those areas where different health care professionals will tell you different things. Generally the
advice is that bathing should be no more than once daily but might be less than this. Go with whatever is
comfortable for you and your child. And of course, exposure to dirt and irritants may vary from day to day, and this
may change the bathing frequency too. Just as the time of year may affect bathing frequency, if a child gets sweatier
in the summer for instance. Whilst bathing should not be more than once daily, cleaning a baby’s face, hands and
bottom may need to be more often!

**How long to soak**
A child should not spend too long in the bath. But equally, the child can still have time to play and enjoy the
experience. About 15 minutes is about right.

**Timing in the day**
Some recommend that you perform your bathing and moisturizing at night just before going to bed. You are unlikely
to further dry out or irritate your skin while sleeping, so the moisture can be more thoroughly absorbed into your
skin.

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**After bathing or showering**
This is the most important bit of advice regarding bathing. It is critical that whenever your child has bathed or showered or been in contact with the water, the skin is gently pat dry with a soft towel followed by plenty of your child’s chosen emollient applied directly to the skin. Allow 30 minutes if possible after using the emollient before applying other treatments such as topical steroids.

**Stinging**
If your child has lots of broken skin, water can cause temporary stinging. This may be helped by applying moisturisers before the bath. If this doesn’t work then seek advice from your doctor as your child may need stronger eczema treatment or antibiotics.

**Water softeners**
Although the hardness of mains water may affect the severity of eczema, a recent national study led from Nottingham study has shown that water softeners are not helpful for improving eczema.

**Wet wipes**
We do not recommend wet wipes as they often contain ingredients to which you can become allergic.

**Other Advice**
- When using emollients in the bath or shower it is important that you clean the bath or shower afterwards. There are several reason for this, the oils and grease can build up making the bath very slippery. Also it helps to clear the drains. We would recommend using washing up liquid hot water and a soft cloth / brush to clean the area. Rinse well to remove all the detergent and dry with kitchen towel.
- Do not leave lids off pots of emollients as this is a source of infection.
- Don’t use flannels that have been left damp of the side of bath as may be another source of infection.
- If using bath toys, grease may build up on them so wash in hot soapy water or dish washer.
- An old towel can be used as a shower mat.

**Further information**
Skin Moisturisers in Atopic Eczema