

## Atopic Eczema: Sun, Holidays and Fun – Information for Parents

Will my child's eczema get better or worse on holiday?

Eczema affects children in different ways, so it is hard to predict how your child's eczema will behave on holiday. Generally, most children improve on holiday as everyone is relaxed and having fun. Some children find that heat can make their eczema worse, especially when they sweat a lot. Others find that a bit of gentle sun and sea clears their eczema completely for a while. Everyone is different.

Things to think about when taking your child on holiday

As eczema is a dry itchy skin condition, there are many things that may irritate the skin, i.e. wool, some foods, sand, wind, pollen, water and extremes or changes in temperature. A child with a lot of eczema covering most of their body may not be able to sweat as effectively as other children, or they may find that the sweat makes their skin itch more. Dry heat and low humidity can cause problems for children with eczema, as do sudden changes in temperature and humidity. So, to make sure things go smoothly for your holidays, remember to think about the following:

**Supplies** Remember to order enough supplies for all your child's treatment well in advance. Even if your child's eczema is under control, remember to take your eczema treatment kit with you.

**Emollients** In hotter weather, you may find a less greasy cream will be better during the day as some children find a very thick greasy emollient sticks to sand, promotes sunburn and makes them hot and itchy,

**Swimming** Water can irritate eczema skin. Even so, many parents find that the seawater actually helps their child's eczema. Salt water may have a mild antiseptic action. If your child goes swimming, please consider showering and reapplying emollient afterwards, as needed.

Written by Professor Hywel Williams, Dr Jane Ravenscroft, Nurse Consultant Sandra Lawton, Dr Jothsana Srinivasan, Dr Ting Seng Tang and parents on behalf of the Nottingham Support Group for Carers of Children with Eczema

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**Sun protection** Eczema reddened skin may be more vulnerable to soreness from sun burn. The best way to manage eczema in the sun is to ensure skin is well moisturised and to continue using active treatment, such as topical steroids, as needed, before applying sunscreen.

**Choosing a sunscreen.** Many sun creams will irritate the skin. Some children with eczema are fine with ordinary family suncreams, but others will find they are best with products that are fragrance free, hypoallergenic, or marketed for 'sensitive skin'. There is not a standard definition of what constitutes hypoallergenic – so each product labelled this way may still contain things to which your child's skin could react. [For additional information regarding sun screen types and ingredients visit National Eczema Society: <https://eczema.org/information-and-advice/triggers-for-eczema/sun-and-eczema/>.] Testing a sun cream or sun block should be done gradually, in advance of the holiday. Try it on an area of the child's eczema free skin and check the result after a few hours. Try it on a small area of eczema skin and do the same check. If there is no reaction after 24 hours, try it over a wider area of skin. Different parts of the body may react differently.

Your child's skin type and colour will affect what sunscreen protection factor you need to use, but generally SPF 30 or over and protection against both UVA and UVB, are recommended for children. A lot of skin irritation from sun creams is due to undertreated eczema rather than something in the sun cream making it worse, so make sure you treat your child's skin properly before you go away.

**Sun safety** It is important that all the family take care in the sun and avoid burning. In general, fair skin is more prone to burning than darker skin types. If you are struggling to find a suitable sunscreen for you or your child, please consider exercise care by staying in the shade between 11-3pm and wear broad-brimmed hats and sunglasses with UV protection. UV protected sun suits or tightly woven cotton clothing can also be a helpful way to protect sore skin in the sun. This can be summarised as: Remember S.H.A.D.E.

Seek the shade between 11am – 3pm

Hats with wide brims and neck protection

Apply SPF 30 or above

Don't burn

Exercise care

**Further information:**

National Eczema Society: <https://eczema.org/information-and-advice/triggers-for-eczema/sun-and-eczema/>

Sun and Eczema <http://www.sunsmart.org.uk/>

Nottingham Support Group for Carers of Children with Eczema [www.nottinghameczema.org.uk/information](http://www.nottinghameczema.org.uk/information)

British Association of Dermatologists Sun protection advice for children and babies

<https://www.skinhealthinfo.org.uk/sun-awareness/sun-protection-advice-for-children-and-babies/>

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