


# NOTTINGHAM SUPPORT GROUP FOR CARERS OF CHILDREN WITH ECZEMA

In association with : Nottingham University Hospitals   
NHS Trust

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.

## Atopic Eczema and Infections Information for Parents

This leaflet tells you more about the sorts of infections that can happen in eczema and what you can do about them.

### 1. General Infections (Chicken Pox, Measles, etc.)

Although some children's eczema seems to get worse after a viral infection, many others seem to improve. At the moment, there is no proof to suggest that any particular infection will make your child's eczema worse or better, and the flare ups and clear periods after infections are probably due to the changeable nature of the eczema. There is also no proof that any of the common childhood vaccinations will make eczema worse, so these should be carried out as normal.

### 2. Secondary Infections

These are infections of the area of skin where the eczema is. Two types of secondary infection are important in eczema – bacterial and viral.

#### Bacterial

The most common secondary bacterial infection in eczema is due to *Staphylococcus aureus*. This infection affects eczema by irritating the skin and can also upset the immune system. Even when your child's eczema is clear, *Staphylococcus aureus* is often found in normal-looking skin. This is because *Staphylococcus aureus* likes dry skin. As secondary infection of the skin is one of the most common reasons for eczema getting worse in young children, it is helpful if you learn to recognise it so you can act early to stop it making your child's eczema worse.

#### What does secondary bacterial infection in eczema look like?

The eczema becomes very red. It may weep a lot and produce golden, dry crusts. Sometimes, you may see small blisters filled with yellowish white cloudy pus.

#### What should I do about secondary bacterial infection if I think it is present?

You should take your child to the doctor as early as possible. Your doctor will probably prescribe antibiotics for your child to take by mouth for 7-14 days. If your child is not allergic to penicillin, your doctor will usually prescribe flucloxacillin which can treat *Staphylococcus aureus*. If your child is allergic to penicillin, then Erythromycin is usually tried instead.

For milder cases of infection, your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic ointment such as Fucidin ointment or Bac-troban ointment and this should be put on the skin regularly for 7 days.

#### What can I do to stop my child's skin being infected in the future?

The most important thing is to not let your child's skin dry out. Dry skin makes a good home for *Staphylococcus aureus*. Regular use (i.e. 2-3 times per day) of an emollient may help to keep infection by *Staphylococcus aureus* at bay. Lots of secondary skin infections are often a sign that the underlying eczema is not controlled well enough, so please talk to your doctor about the best treatment.

#### Viral


Sometimes, the cold sore virus (*herpes simplex*) can spread quickly on a patch of eczema. Usually, this happens on the face.

website - [www.nottinghameczema.org.uk](http://www.nottinghameczema.org.uk)

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## **What does the cold sore virus (herpes simplex) in eczema look like?**

Early on, you will see a lot of small blisters filled with clear fluid surrounded by a bright red circle on the surface of the skin. Within 1-2 days, these blisters break quickly to leave a lot of small round breaks in the skin surface. This is called eczema herpeticum. This area may become very sore and your child may feel poorly.

## **What should I do about a viral infection in eczema if I think it is present?**

If you suspect your child has herpes infection you should take your child to see their doctor on the same day as it can spread very quickly. If the problem is due to herpes simplex virus, then the condition is easily treated by a 5 day course of a medicine called Aciclovir. Secondary infection with herpes simplex virus is far less common than secondary infection with Staphylococcus aureus. If you have a cold sore on your lips, you should avoid kissing your child. Open containers of skin treatments such as emollients can become contaminated, so you should throw them away once an infection has cleared and get new supplies.

For further advice please contact  
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Website : [www.nottinghameczema.org.uk](http://www.nottinghameczema.org.uk)

For advice on support issues please contact the NSGCCE via the website [www.nottinghameczema.org.uk](http://www.nottinghameczema.org.uk) and click on the contact icon



at the top of most pages or email us at

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