


# 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.


## Caring for eczema during winter - Information for Parents

A child's skin is very susceptible to temperature extremes and needs time to adapt from a summer to a winter skin. If winter makes the eczema flare, here are ten top tips to minimise the impact:

- 1. Moisturize the skin frequently.** A heavier emollient/moisturiser can help to protect the skin when exposed to the harsh weather. This is because the water content in the air is much lower when cold.
- 2. Protect the hands.** Hands are washed many times each day. Using excessively hot water for hand washing drains the skin of natural oils. Apply hand cream after *every* washing to prevent chapping and cracking, which can lead to bleeding where the knuckles and fingers bend if not lubricated properly. Encourage glove wearing for outdoors to protect hands from wind damage. Make sure the gloves are made from materials that don't irritate the skin.
- 3. Lukewarm showers.** When it's cold, we have a tendency to want to take a long, relaxing, hot bath or shower. But, remember, hot water dries out the skin by stripping its natural oils. Just as when washing hands, use just warm water when bathing and apply moisturisers afterwards. Also keep shower time short in winter - no more than 10 minutes - and only once within a 24-hour period.
- 4. Turn down the heat.** Hot air is drier than cool air. So, don't crank up the heat when it's cold outside. Instead, try setting your thermostat at a cool, yet comfortable temperature between 20 and 22 degrees centigrade to prevent skin from losing moisture.
- 5. Bundle up.** Wear the appropriate clothing for the temperature and dress in layers. Wear soft, breathable materials against your skin and then pull on a warm sweater. Wearing layers allows clothing to be removed as needed to prevent overheating, which can trigger a scratch/itch cycle. Individuals with eczema should avoid direct skin contact with wool or rough nylon, which can be irritating. The layers in direct contact with the skin should be given an extra rinse cycle when washing, as laundry detergent or conditioner can equally be irritating.
- 6. Indoor time.** Spending more time indoors can mean more problems with dust mites, pet dander, cigarette smoke, gas fumes and household sprays and chemicals, any of which can trigger eczema symptoms. Mould and dust mites thrive in humidity, so keep indoor humidity level below 35 percent. Avoid or minimize being in households with pets, if the eczema gets worse when in contact with cats or dogs.
- 7. Playtime outside.** First frost kills most moulds outdoors. Even so, keep children from playing in areas that mold prefers, such as dark, damp wooded areas and piles of fallen leaves.
- 8. Shampoo.** A recent Nottingham study found that worsening of eczema by using shampoos in the shower may be worse in cold weather. Try shampooing the hair over the side of the bath with a shower head in order to avoid the shampoo running off onto the whole body.
- 9. Use sunscreen.** Yes, even on sunny days in winter, especially if you go away on a ski holiday. Apply a sunscreen with at least an SPF of 15, and apply lip balm to protect the lips. Most include sunscreen, but check the label to be sure before purchasing the lip balm
- 10. Stick to your skincare routine.** With shortening days it can be difficult to get your child up in the morning whilst it is dark – but still make time to apply their creams ready for the day ahead.

For further advice please contact  
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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  
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