

# 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.

## **Eczema and Exercise - Information for Patients**

Sweat and heat may make the skin of people with eczema more itchy or sore. Exercising is good for the body and mind. Here are some simple tips to make exercising good fun for people with eczema.

### **Exercise options**

No form of exercise should be out of bounds for someone with eczema but some can be easier to do than others. If itch or soreness is a problem, trial and error can establish the length of bursts of exercise which are possible before the itch and soreness become unbearable. Try lower energy exercises like yoga. Dab away sweat rather than wipe it away, there is less irritation that way.

If grass allergy affects your eczema, swimming avoids this but dries out the skin. Different pools may use different methods apart from chlorine to keep the water clean. It is trial and error to which one suits individual. If the eczema is infected it may be wise to avoid swimming. Eczema skin is more susceptible to the drying effect of the water and chlorine. It needs protection. You should apply emollient prior to swimming; it does not need to be a thick application, which would result in the emollient floating in the pool. After swimming you should shower immediately and then reapply the emollient. Do not wait until you get home, the skin will become dry and irritated very quickly. When using emollients in the pool please be aware of slipping and leave the area safe afterwards.

For sports that require shin pads apply an emollient, then a cotton tubular bandage and then shin pads to help prevent the dirt, sweat and shin pads causing further irritation.

### **Environment**

Inside or outside? Static cycling in a cooled room may be preferable to being outside in the midday summer sun. Working out at home allows the person to wear less clothing without being vulnerable. But a cooling breeze outside could help too.

With outside sports, problem areas of skin may include the face, hands and legs if exposed to many of the factors which may irritate, such as changes in temperature, snow, ice, mud, dust and grass. Emollient applied before the activity will help to protect the skin.

### **Clothing**

Wear layers, so that they can be gradually discarded as the body warms up. Light cotton or wicking garments are best next to the skin. Sweat bands may help to keep irritation localised. If hair tends to make the skin sensitive, find an acceptable way of restraining it (cap or tie back). Clothing for many sporting activities may contain synthetic materials so you may wish to wear a light cotton garment or cotton gloves underneath the relevant piece of equipment / clothing.

### **Showering afterwards**


Showering after exercise helps to get rid of irritants from the skin (sweat, salt, grass and chlorine) but will dry out the skin. Use a soap substitute, keep the water not too hot and pat dry before applying plenty of emollients as soon as you get out of the shower.

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

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## Precautions

Use a Vaseline based lip balm that is not perfumed or flavoured to protect the lips. Put your emollient on before exercise (especially if swimming or to aid flexibility over joints if you have skin cracks over them). If sweating and overheating are problems, avoid the thicker emollients ointments which may make the body heat up even more. Use sun block of SPF30 or more when exercising outside (remembering to treat the skin that will be exposed as the layers are peeled off). Take antihistamine if grass contact or hay fever is going to be a problem. If the pollen count is high, apply emollients when going outside to prevent the pollen penetrating the skin and wash face when coming in. Apply some Vaseline to the nostrils to prevent pollens penetrating the airways.

If your asthma is brought on by exercise or when going out in the cold, then you can take a short-acting reliever inhaler (salbutamol) before you go out.

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  
top of most pages or email us at [enquiry@nottinghameczema.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@nottinghameczema.org.uk)

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