

reduces the chance of eczema coming back as a flare. As a result, there are fewer times when you need to use steroids every day to 'get control,' and the total amount of steroids needed may be less.

What are the benefits of controlling eczema?

Maintaining good control of eczema should mean that symptoms (itchiness, scratching) will be kept better under control. This will improve your child's quality of life and help them to thrive.

Where can I find more information?

Please see your child's GP or paediatrician for advice about how to manage their eczema. The Whittington Health NHS Trust leaflet '**Eczema: Emollients**' is available from the Paediatric Department and provides further information about how to get the best out of moisturising treatments for your child's eczema.

The National Eczema Society is also an excellent resource for further information and advice: www.eczema.org

References

Get control and Keep control. Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust. 2013.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a question, compliment, comment or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

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Eczema: 'Get control, keep control'

A parent's guide



Your doctor has prescribed steroid creams or ointments (topical steroids) to treat your child's eczema. These have been shown to be very effective at treating eczema. Dermatologists have carried out research to find the most effective ways to use topical steroids to control eczema whilst reducing the chance of side effects. One of the most effective ways to control eczema is a two-stage regime that we call 'get control, keep control.'

'Get control, keep control'

Eczema is a longstanding condition where the severity comes and goes, or 'flares.' Often after treatment, even when it looks like the eczema has gone, there is still activity in the skin. The most effective treatments don't just treat the eczema when you can see it, but continue to work during the time when the skin looks normal but the eczema is still active.

Step one: 'Get control'

The first step is to be used when you can see eczema on your child's skin. At this stage, we need to 'get control' using a topical steroid on the affected area **every day for two weeks, in addition to moisturising emollients.**

Step two: 'Keep control'

Once the eczema looks like it has cleared, there will still be abnormalities in the skin which can't be seen (subclinical eczema). At this stage the topical steroids should only be used for **two consecutive days** during each week. Many parents find this easiest to do at weekends so we often call this '**weekend therapy.**'

Topical steroids come in different strengths: your doctor will decide what strength of steroid to prescribe based on the age of your child, the severity of the eczema, and where on the body the steroid is to be used.

You should continue to use moisturising emollients every day.

What should we do if the eczema flares whilst doing this?

We know that despite the best treatment, eczema will continue to flare: there are many reasons why eczema flares and it is not always possible to avoid this. If it happens, go back to step one again to 'get control.'

What about the side effects of steroid creams?

Parents are often very concerned that using topical steroids may expose their child to harmful side effects. However, if used correctly, as directed by your doctor, side-effects are very unlikely to occur.

'Skin thinning,' for example, can be associated with using the very strong (potent or super-potent) topical steroids for too long a period without a break, or on the wrong part of the body.

Some parents are so concerned about side-effects that they use only very small amounts of medication: the dose is then too small and the eczema remains uncontrolled.

A number of studies have been done to look at the benefit of using topical steroids in eczema versus the potential harm from side-effects. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) looked at these studies and concluded the benefit of using topical steroids in eczema outweighs the potential harm from side-effects when used correctly.

Studies have shown that using topical steroids two days a week to 'keep control'