

FAQ SHEET

WHAT IS ECZEMA?

Eczema (atopic dermatitis) is a recurring, non-infectious, inflammatory skin condition affecting one in three Australians at some stage throughout their lives.

WHAT CAUSES ECZEMA?

The exact cause of eczema is unknown, however, can be linked to the following internal and external triggers:

Internal:

- A family history of eczema, asthma or hay fever (the strongest predictor): if both parents have eczema, there is an up to 80 per cent chance their children may also develop eczema
- Some foods and alcohol: dairy and wheat products, citrus fruits, eggs, nuts, seafood, chemical food additives, preservatives and colourings
- Stress

External:

- Irritants: tobacco smoke, chemicals, weather (hot and humid or cold and dry conditions) and air conditioning or overheating
- Allergens: house dust mites, moulds, grasses, plant pollens, foods, pets and clothing, soaps, shampoos and washing

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ECZEMA?

- Moderate-to-severe itching skin
- A rash – dry, red, patchy or cracked skin
- Skin weeping watery fluid
- Rough or “leathery” thick skin

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR ECZEMA?

The goal of treating eczema is to heal the skin and prevent or minimise flare-ups. This can be done by using a moisturiser that prevents skin from cracking, itching and offers relief. Moisturised skin also helps block out germs that cause infections. From time to time you may need to use a topical steroid treatment to help manage an eczema flare-up.

ECZEMA AND MENTAL HEALTH

*This information was obtained from the International Centre for Community-Driven research PEEK study report:
<https://www.cc-dr.org/peek/repository/2018auade/>*

- During times of stress or trauma, our skin is prone to flare ups in existing skin conditions. Whether these are breakouts, full-blown acne, super sensitivity, redness or dry, tight, rough skin, they all show how our skin's functionality has been compromised.
- 1 in 10 sufferers reported that eczema has a significant impact on relationships in relation to self-esteem and confidence / being embarrassed
- 43 per cent of sufferers said eczema causes a significant impact in relation to self-esteem and confidence
- Mean quality of life ranged from 2.40 to 3.62 – that is, all quality-of-life scores were within the “life distressing” to “life was a little distressing” range
- 64 per cent of participants noted they have no support at diagnoses

*The below information was obtained from statistics released by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), from the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA):
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamadermatology/fullarticle/2717582>*

- Patients with eczema are at ‘significantly greater risk’ of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts
- Patients with eczema are 44% more likely to exhibit suicidal ideation and 36% more likely to attempt suicide compared with patients without the condition.

ECZEMA AND COVID-19 TIPS

- If you are an asthma or hay fever sufferer, make sure you are using your preventative medicines as prescribed
- Practice good hygiene and your [wash hands thoroughly](#) with soap free wash
- Take a daily probiotic to boost your immune system
- Ensure you have enough prescription medication in case you need to self-isolate
- Don't panic! Visit your health professional if you have any concerns
- More information for patients receiving immunosuppressive medication through the PBS or clinical trials can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2UroaXv>

THE ECZEMA ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALASIA INC

The Eczema Association of Australasia Inc (EAA), is a national, non-profit charity organisation serving eczema sufferers for more than 25 years. The EAA is a valuable source of knowledge and advice on a wide range of issues associated with the management and treatment of eczema.

For more information, contact **1300 300 182** or email help@eczema.org.au.

THE ECZEMA ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC

The Eczema Association of New Zealand (EANZ), is a national, non-profit charity organisation serving eczema sufferers. The EANZ is a valuable source of knowledge and advice on a wide range of issues associated with the management and treatment of eczema.

For more information, contact **0800 300 182** or email help@eczema.org.nz.