

# Atopic eczema

## Activity pack for teachers

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## Circle Time

What follows is the outline of a suggested script for a member of staff to use with children in the early years of schooling, based on the National Eczema Society's schools quiz. There are a series of questions and suggested prompts to help the children understand this condition.

### 1 What does the word eczema mean?

Explain that it is a Greek word. Ask does it mean: to itch, to boil, to burn or to peel. It actually means to boil and this is very relevant as people with eczema say their skin feels very hot.

### 2 Why do people get eczema?

Offer the following suggestions:

It runs in the family - for example, a close relative has eczema, asthma or hay fever

They catch it from someone else

They are an ATOPIC person

They are allergic to certain things

All but the 'catch it' option are true - please emphasise to the children that eczema is NOT contagious. You can liken eczema to sunburn, which is also a condition of the skin, a child will understand that they cannot catch sunburn from another person.

### 3 What does ATOPIC mean?

We would like children to understand the word 'Atopic', make the following suggestions:

A project for school

Someone who is atopic may be more likely to develop allergies

Someone who may also have asthma or hay fever

During the discussions, point out that someone who is atopic will produce a 'reaction' to something which is otherwise harmless. For example: feathers, cats, dogs or pollen can cause someone who is atopic to produce a reaction. They may sneeze, get watery eyes, wheeze or itch. Someone who is not atopic will not react in these circumstances.

### 4 What is an allergy?

The following are suggestions which will hopefully lead the children to the correct conclusion:

A breakfast cereal

Your body's dislike of some of the things that you eat, touch or breathe in

A small alligator

A bad cold

As with the previous question, someone who is atopic will produce an allergic reaction and therefore an allergy is your body's dislike of something, which you touch, eat or breathe in.

Examples being if you touch an animal you may itch; if you are allergic to nuts and you eat one you may have an anaphylactic reaction; if you breathe in pollen you may sneeze or develop an asthma type reaction.



## Circle Time

The object of the next few questions is to understand the difference between different atopic conditions.

5 How do you know if you have asthma?

- a) You get spots
- b) You cough
- c) You wheeze

People with asthma will wheeze, but they might have a night time cough as well.

6 How do you know if you have eczema?

- a) You wheeze
- b) You get a rash or spots
- c) You itch

Eczema produces a rash or raised areas, and it itches!

7 How do you know if you have hay fever?

- a) You have itchy skin
- b) You sneeze
- c) You have sore itchy eyes

Hay fever makes you sneeze and/or have sore itchy eyes, but will not give you itchy skin.

The next section looks at things which can affect eczema.

8 What sort of things can make eczema worse?

This is an opportunity to highlight situations and items which may exacerbate the skin - illustrating what a fickle condition it is, as the children will soon realise that some things can make eczema better or worse! For example, hot sunny places!

Ideas which may exacerbate eczema are:

Cold weather

Alligators

Woolly sweaters

Worrying

Football kits

Hot sunny places

Soap powder

Only alligators are in the clear - unless, of course, you come face to face with one on the loose which may cause considerable stress, and stress can make you itch!



# Circle Time

9 What sort of things can make eczema better?

**At this point, it is interesting to discuss the fact that some of the same things and situations come up as in previous questions AND what suits one person's needs may not suit another's.**

Ideas 'to make it better'

Happy feelings

Sunshine

Cotton clothes

Creams and baths

Relaxing and chilling out

Cold weather

A discussion point would be that for some people sunshine makes their eczema worse and for some people it will improve their condition. The same applies to cold weather.

Also, some individuals will find that sometimes their eczema improves in the sun and sometimes their eczema gets worse with the sun - a nightmare!

## Key Learning Points

Eczema is not contagious

The meaning of Atopic

The meaning of Allergy

Causes of eczema

Relationship of eczema, hay fever, asthma



## Draw a picture of an itch

Imagine you have eczema - and DRAW A PICTURE.

There are lots of things you can draw, but they should all have to do with the terrible itching of eczema.

For example, you could:

- Draw an itch  
What does an itch look like? Would a really bad itch be spiky, red, hot and cross perhaps?
- Can you draw someone with very itchy eczema?  
How do you think they would feel?
- Can you draw the same person after they have applied their creams?  
They will now be feeling cool and calm. No more nasty itch!

Here's a drawing by 6-year-old John of how he thinks eczema would feel

"My skin would be all red and itchy and make me cry. I would not play with my friends in case I got hot. My skin would be all red. I might bleed. I would stay awake at night scratching. Even flowers could make me worse."

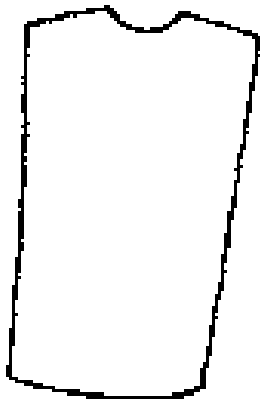


# Choose the right length of bandages

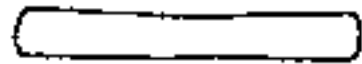
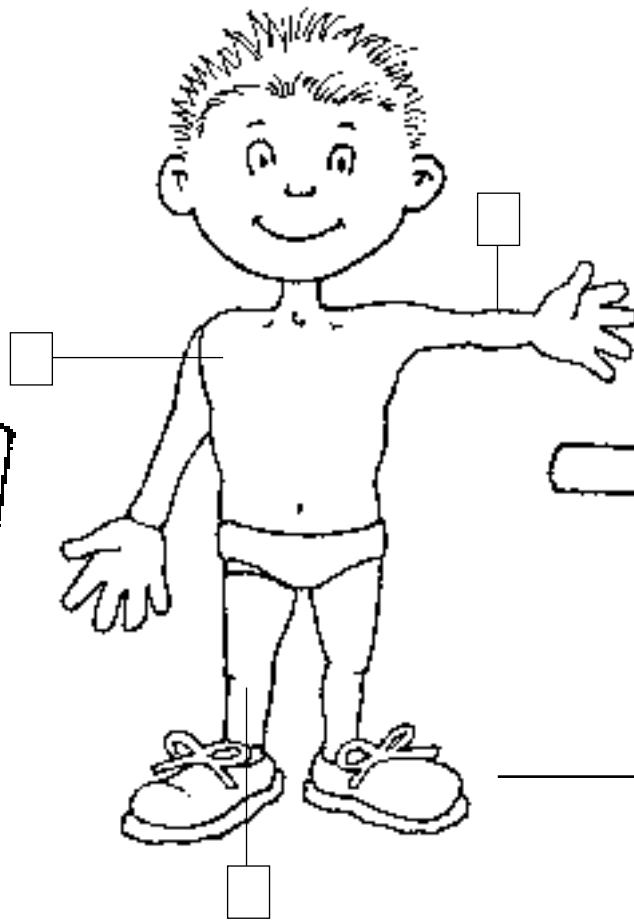
Using the picture of Thomas, match the correct size of Wet Wrap bandage to Thomas's arm, leg and body. Ask a grown up to help you cut out the bandages and put them on Thomas.



A



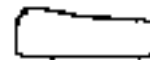
B



F



G



H

For his arm

C



D



E

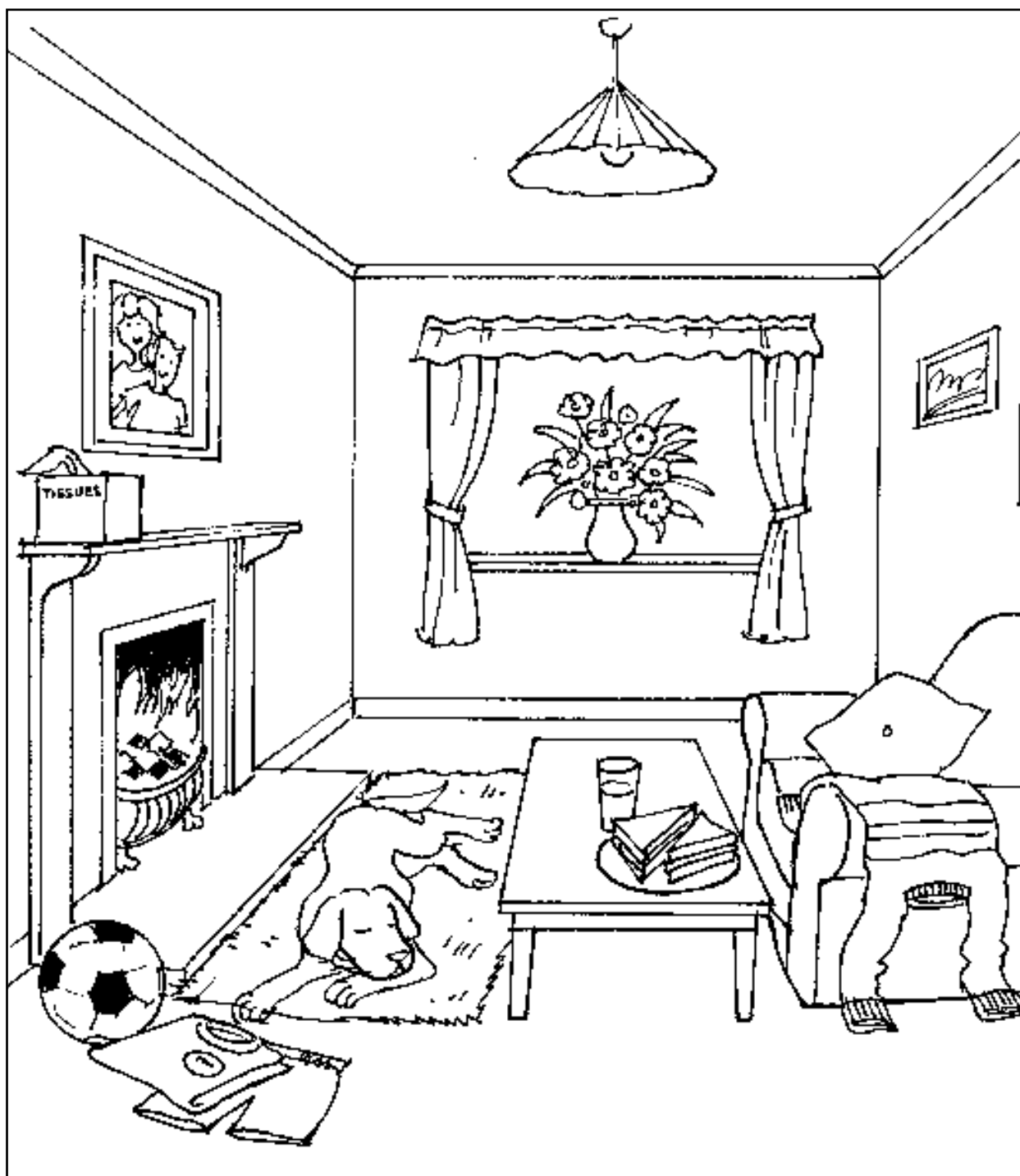


For his leg



## What should you be careful about in this picture?

See how many things you can see that could cause problems for someone who has atopic eczema. When you've finished, why not have some fun and colour it in?



## Answers

- People who have eczema have to be careful about things which can make their eczema worse such as pet hair (the dog) and pollen (the flowers)
- The rug may also retain dust mites and pet fleas, which can trigger eczema or make it worse
- They can also be allergic to certain foods, such as wheat or dairy products (the sandwiches)
- Extreme temperatures can aggravate eczema (the fire)
- Clothing can also cause problems (the woolly jumper and the football kit). Loose cotton clothing is best.
- Energetic activity can cause sweating, which can make eczema worse (the football kit again).



## Word square

In this square there are a number of words that are about eczema. These words can run up and down and diagonally. Look carefully at the list of words and tick them off every time you find one.

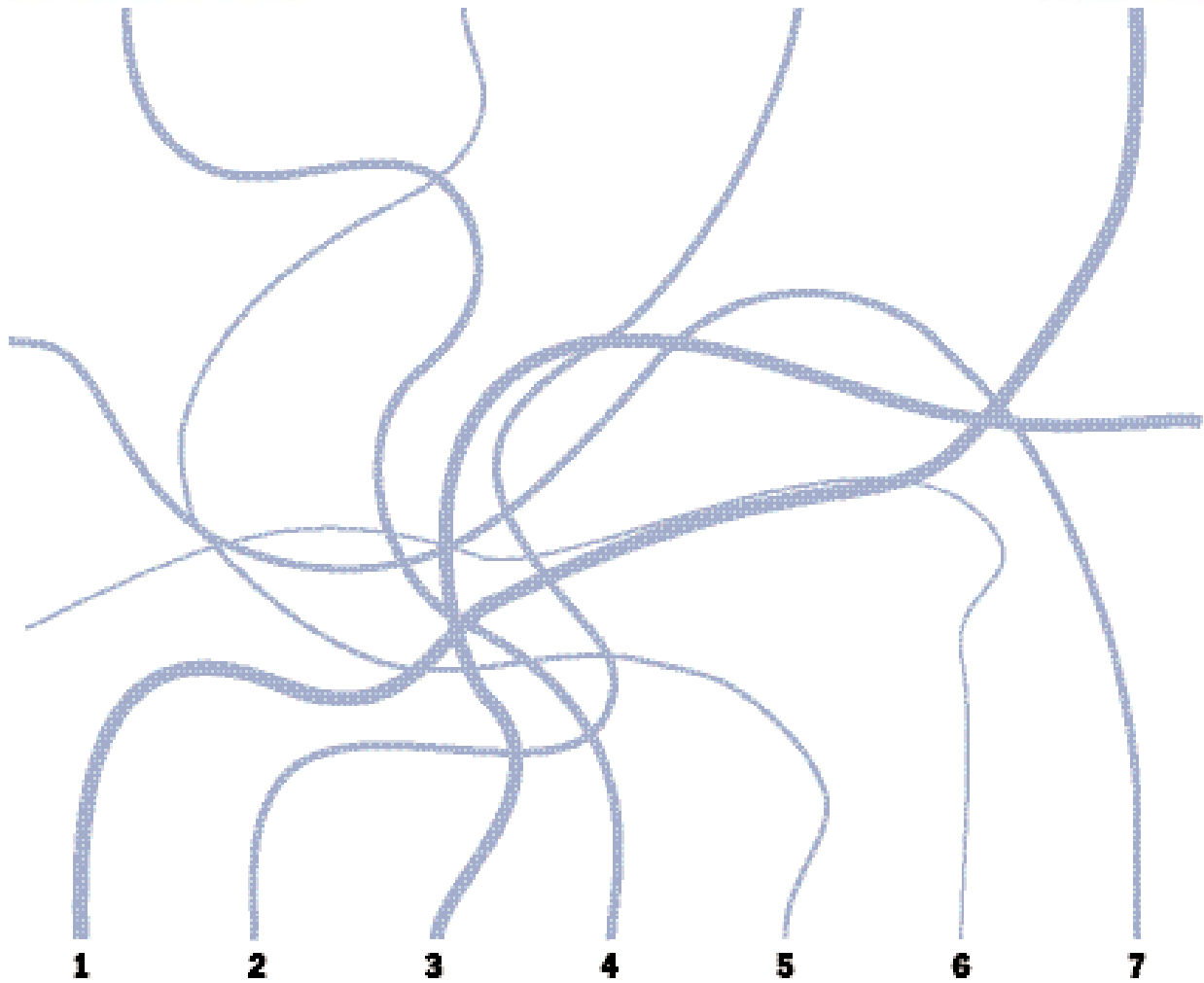
- |                                 |                               |                                  |                                 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> cool   | <input type="checkbox"/> wash | <input type="checkbox"/> water   | <input type="checkbox"/> rash   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> soothe | <input type="checkbox"/> itch | <input type="checkbox"/> soap    | <input type="checkbox"/> eczema |
| <input type="checkbox"/> raw    | <input type="checkbox"/> pain | <input type="checkbox"/> scratch |                                 |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| w | e | a | w | r | b | p | h |
| a | c | h | a | a | k | a | c |
| s | z | u | t | w | z | i | t |
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# A Maze

Help Thomas find his friends or what he needs to relieve his itching eg. bath, emollient (special cream), cotton clothes.



# Scaly Snake, Spotted Dog and Itchy Engine.

This is the story of Scaly Snake, Spotted Dog and Itchy Engine, who all lived in Nesland.

Scaly Snake had a problem with his skin. Instead of peeling off once a year like other snakes' skin - his seemed to want to peel off all the time.

So he kept leaving bits here and bits there. He wriggled so much, he wore himself out.

Spotted Dog also had a problem with his skin. Spots came up in one place one day, and in another place the next!

Even when he was a puppy, he was different from all his brothers and sisters. But it was all right because his mother had been just the same.

The trouble was he scratched a lot, so he was given soothing baths with special shampoo nearly every day. But how he longed not to have itchy spots!

Itchy Engine also had a problem. It didn't matter how many times he was given a new coat of paint, it always bubbled up into blisters, and then turned into rusty patches. It made him feel really uncomfortable. On bad days he would rush about the countryside on his railway track, going:

ITCHY... ITCHY... ITCHY... ITCHY... ITCHY...  
ITCHYITCHYITCHYITCHYITCHYITCHYITCHY...

That's how he got his name!

But he knew once a year he had a very special job to do, and this made him feel happy and important.

When the time arrived, the news travelled fast. The birds twittered it. The leaves in the trees whispered it. The wind carried the message to all the corners of Nesland...

'THE GRANDEK ZEMA EXPECTS YOU! THE GRANDEK ZEMA EXPECTS YOU!'

The Grandek Zema was a wizard who lived in a big glass castle in the North of Nesland. He too, always had trouble with his skin. But being interested in magic ointments and medicines, he set about helping others as well.



As a young wizard he was just called Zema. But whenever he made a new ointment, his friends would say "Eee, by 'eck, Zema - that's grand!" That's how he got his name!

So Itchy Engine's job was to collect everyone with a skin problem and take them on his train to see The Grandek Zema.

Spotted Dog and Scaly Snake heard the message and couldn't wait for the day to arrive. They were so excited! And so surprised when the train came to see lots of others going too.

There was a spotted horse, who said she spent much of her time rolling over and over. There was an elephant, who said he had to stand in a pool all day throwing water over his back to keep his skin wet. AND THERE WERE LOTS OF BOYS AND GIRLS just like you!

The journey passed quickly with so much to talk about and soon the glass castle came into sight. Through the walls they could see bubblings and mixings, shelves and shelves of jars and bottles, and pots and pots of creams to make their skin better.

The Grandek Zema listed to everyone in turn. He gave each of them a special pot of ointment to take home and a new pair of cotton mittens for the children and Spotted Dog.

Itchy Engine blew his whistle when it was time to leave and The Grandek Zema called everyone together for 'Question Time'. HIS questions, of course! This happened every year and some of them knew the answers already.

"What's better than doing nothing?"

"Keeping busy!" said Spotted Dog, wagging his tail very fast.

"What's better than being cross?"

"Keeping calm!" said the elephant, swinging his trunk slowly from side to side.

"What's better than worrying?"

"Sharing your problems!" said a smiling girl in a bright cotton dress.

"What's better than scratching?"



**FOUNDATION/RECEPTION TO YEAR 3**

"NOT SCRATCHING!" they all shouted together, and laughed.

"Or rubbing instead," the Grandek Zema reminded them, because he knew how hard it was not to scratch.

"So, will you promise to try hard?" he said, finally.

"WE PROMISE!" they said. All, but one...

Scaly Snake had creamed himself all over with new ointment and curled up for a nap.

"I promisssssss...sss...ss..." he said sleepily, without a single wriggle.

Then Itchy Engine took them all home... until the next time.

If YOU will promise too, just before you go to sleep, The Grandek Zema will be listening!

