



Atopic eczema

Activity pack for teachers

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Year 8+

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Claire Sweeney had eczema for around six years. Here is her account of how she feels about it:

"I get eczema on my face, just along the creases from my nose to my mouth. It gets quite red and pimply when it's inflamed.

I do get conscious of it when I'm working although I am lucky because it doesn't affect my work and even the heavy make up doesn't seem to affect it.

I don't mind talking about my eczema because I know lots of people who have similar skin problems."



Group discussion

Pupils should read the following 'Dear Doctor' scenario, then discuss the problem in groups, formulate their own advice, then see how it compares with that provided by the Doctor.

Dear Doctor

I love going out to parties with friends and shopping for new clothes and make-up like anybody else. My problem is that I have eczema, which constantly makes my skin feel itchy and means I often have a blotchy red face and patches of dry, flaky skin on my body. Wearing crop tops can be embarrassing for me so I tend to avoid buying the latest fashions which makes me feel down in the dumps and very self-conscious. I also have terrible problems sleeping at night because my skin gets so itchy and hot. Can you help?

Jenny Bates

Dear Doctor

When I sit in class, the other children don't like sitting next to me. The teacher makes them, but I can tell they're not happy. I know it's because of my eczema, which looks red and horrible and can get very itchy, but it's on me not them. I'm unhappy and don't look forward to school any more. Sometimes all I can think about is the itching and I don't pay attention to the lessons, so I'm falling behind. Mum thinks I'm being bullied, but I'm not. I'm just lonely. Even in the playground, the other kids stay away from me. What can I do?

Andrew Clark



Answers

Dear Jenny

Thank you for your letter.

One of the most important aspects of managing eczema is to have a good skin care routine using emollients, which are medical moisturisers. These will help put the moisture back and soothe your skin, and help prevent irritation. Emollients come in the form of creams, lotions and ointments, soap substitutes and bath oils. The more emollients you use, the better the skin will look, and you can apply them as many times a day as you wish. There are plenty to choose from and it's a case of trial and error finding the right ones that will suit your skin. Creams and lotions are less greasy and absorb into the skin quicker, and you could put them in a trendy pot to take to school to apply and wash your hands with. It is best to avoid soaps in all forms as they can dry out the skin and make the eczema worse.

Most people with eczema avoid materials that could aggravate the skin such as wool and some synthetics. Cotton and silk are fine to wear as they allow the skin to breathe and will keep you cooler.

At night, keep the bedroom as cool as possible. This may mean having a window open or turning down the central heating as people with eczema tend to be hotter. Keep a tub of your favourite emollient by your bedside, so if you wake up in the night scratching you can apply it. Have lots of thin cotton sheets rather than a thick duvet, as these can be pulled back in the night if you become too hot.

If you like wearing make-up you could try a small amount on your skin first and leave it for a few hours to make sure it won't trigger the eczema.



Answers

Dear Andrew

There are many young people who have eczema and you are not alone. Ask your mum to talk to the teachers about the eczema and how it affects your life, especially at school.

Perhaps your teacher could talk about skin conditions to the rest of the class, explaining that eczema is not catching. You may find that other children also have a skin condition that you are unaware of.

Explain to your teachers that you need to avoid sitting next to the window or a radiator, as this could make you hotter, which in turn will make you itch and affect your concentration.

It is important to establish a good skin care routine, using emollients as often as you can. These will help prevent the itching, and help to put the moisture back. You could put your emollient in a small pot to take to school to apply when needed and to wash your hands with. Your mum should talk to the school about allowing you to leave the classroom for a short time when you need to apply your emollient.

For more information

To find out more about eczema and how it can be dealt with at school read:

- 'Managing Eczema at Secondary School', written by Jane Morgan, Regional Manager for the National Eczema Society.



In the press

The coverage of atopic eczema in the press is growing as the scale and impact of the condition becomes more apparent. Collected here is a selection of extracts from magazine articles. You could also refer to the National Eczema Society website, www.eczema.org for additional information. When pupils have read them, encourage a group discussion covering the following points:

- 1 What treatments are recommended?
- 2 What percentage of children have eczema?
- 3 Why do you think this is?
- 4 What is eczema linked to?
- 5 How do you think this affects the whole family?
- 6 What are the social and psychological aspects of eczema?
- 7 How can you make a difference?

For more information

Please read:

- Imagine you have an itch re-printed from NES Exchange magazine.
- Body and Soul living with Eczema re-printed from OK magazine.
- Life and Living sentenced to suffer re-printed from Middlesbrough Evening Gazette.



Offering answers

Once pupils are aware of the problems involved with atopic eczema, both for the sufferer and their immediate family, their friends and their fellow pupils, encourage them to tackle the problem in one of the following formats:

WRITE AS AN AGONY AUNT

As an Agony Aunt explaining to a teenager with eczema that:

- They're not alone
- The condition can be controlled and how
- It needn't ruin their life
- What they should do for themselves
- What doctors can do for them
- Who they should talk to
- What their school can do to help.

DESIGN A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

- They're not alone
- The condition can be controlled and how
- It needn't ruin their life
- What they should do for themselves
- What doctors can do for them
- Who they should talk to
- What their school can do to help.

DESIGN A LEAFLET TO HELP PEOPLE WITH ECZEMA

- They're not alone
- The condition can be controlled and how
- It needn't ruin their life
- What they should do for themselves
- What doctors can do for them
- Who they should talk to
- What their school can do to help.



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 you can find and tick them off every time you find one.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ALLERGY | <input type="checkbox"/> ATOPIC | <input type="checkbox"/> BATH | <input type="checkbox"/> SKIN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COLD | <input type="checkbox"/> COTTON | <input type="checkbox"/> CREAMS | <input type="checkbox"/> IRRITANT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ITCHES | <input type="checkbox"/> SEBORRHOEIC | <input type="checkbox"/> EMOLLIENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OIL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STEROIDS | <input type="checkbox"/> DIET | <input type="checkbox"/> BANDAGES | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ITCHY | <input type="checkbox"/> HIVES | <input type="checkbox"/> ECZEMA | |

S	E	B	O	R	R	H	O	E	I	C
T	C	A	I	C	B	I	C	F	T	Z
E	Z	T	L	Z	R	V	D	E	C	H
R	E	H	Y	H	G	E	D	E	H	J
O	M	X	C	A	T	S	A	F	Y	G
I	A	T	O	P	I	C	C	M	Y	A
D	W	I	L	B	T	K	S	I	S	X
S	J	V	D	A	C	O	T	T	O	N
S	B	U	K	Y	H	L	B	W	Q	I
M	K	A	L	L	E	R	G	Y	R	R
S	L	I	N	P	S	M	N	L	U	R
N	O	T	N	D	J	K	A	V	M	I
W	X	P	M	P	A	B	S	B	D	T
R	P	S	O	H	I	G	C	I	D	A
Q	E	M	O	L	L	I	E	N	T	N
O	Q	R	P	N	G	T	F	S	E	T



Choose from one of the following:

WRITE A POEM

Here's a poem written by a 14-year-old girl who has bad atopic eczema. Write one that would show others how it must be like to have eczema.

Why are people so cruel?	It's really sore
Is it an unspoken rule?	And very, very raw
They call me names	Why can't people leave me alone?
As if I'm to blame	I wish I was at home
Don't they understand?	Don't they know it makes me cry?
It really isn't planned	Why do they call me names? Oh why?
You can't catch it	
Not even a bit	
It makes me scratch	
Even a small patch	

DRAW A PICTURE

Here's a drawing by a 13-year-old boy of how he feels when his eczema is bad.



Now you try to draw how eczema must feel like. Don't draw what sore skin looks like, but how you would feel.

THE BEST EXAMPLES IN EACH CATEGORY WILL BE FEATURED ON THE SSL-WETWRAPS WEBSITE.