



# Recognizing the Signs of an Eczema Rash

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## What Is an Eczema Rash?

Are you suffering from persistent dry patches of skin that are itchy, red and inflamed? Do you have areas of raised red bumps and flaky skin? If you answered yes, then you may have a dreaded eczema rash.

This is a common skin condition that can lead to extreme discomfort, frustration, embarrassment, sleeplessness, and loss of concentration at work or school.

An eczema rash — also known as dermatitis — is a pattern of symptoms involved in various skin conditions. Symptoms can differ depending on the person, but they usually involve dry skin, redness, itchiness, raised red bumps, flaky skin, blistering, weeping and crusting.

This skin eruption can occur anywhere on the body, but it is most often found on the scalp, face, wrists, and backs of the legs. It is cyclical in nature, and results in episodes of remission, as well as periods where it flares up again.

They can be classified as acute, sub-acute or chronic, according to symptoms.

## Types of Eczema Rashes

- An **acute eczema rash** describes the initial onset. Its symptoms include redness, swelling, pain, itching, blisters, and bumps.
- A **sub-acute eczema rash** has been present for a while but is not quite considered chronic. The skin remains itchy, but also starts to crack and flake, and develops a scaly appearance.
- A **chronic eczema rash** is one that has lasted more than three months and has become darker, with thick and leathery skin that is itchy and uncomfortable. A chronic rash is more likely to ooze liquid and become infected from prolonged scratching.

It can be tricky to know whether you actually have an eczema rash because so many skin conditions present with a rash. So, keep in mind that some eczema rash “red flags” are itching, a crusty appearance, and fluid leaking or oozing from red bumps on the skin.

## Eczema Rash Causes

The cause of this rash is not understood completely. However, we know it is the result of a damaged skin barrier that cannot seal in adequate moisture or effectively protect itself.

The rash is generally put into two categories based on its triggers: an allergic eczema rash, or an irritant eczema rash.

An **allergic eczema rash** is the result of an immune system that reacts to allergens by initiating an inflammatory

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response. This may be triggered by internal allergens in the form of foods and food additives, or external allergens like cigarette smoke, pollen, dust and pet dander.

An **irritant eczema rash** is typically triggered by direct contact with environmental irritants over time, like poisonous plants, hair dye, cosmetics, detergents and solvents.

In certain cases, an eczema rash may be the result of a scabies infection. Dust mites burrow into the skin and lay eggs, which can result in extreme skin irritation.

Stress is a major trigger for all eczema rashes because it suppresses the immune system and encourages inflammation.

Unfortunately, air-conditioners and central heating systems can also set off eczema rashes by drying out the air.

### **Eczema Rash Treatment**

There are lifestyle and medical interventions that you can implement to reduce and control the unpleasant symptoms of an eczema rash.

#### **Prevent Scratching**

Keep your nails short, wear mittens and cover up with soft clothing to prevent scratching, as this will worsen the condition and cause infection. This is especially important for babies and children with an eczema rash.

#### **Keep Cool**

Sweating can irritate and dry out your skin, so avoid vigorous exercise or bundling up too tightly in the winter. Wear breathable cotton clothing to keep cool and protect your skin from the elements.

#### **Avoid Allergens and Irritants**

Work on removing all potential allergens from your environment by cleaning your home well and keeping pets out of the bedroom and off your furniture.

Switch to all-natural body products and cleaning products, which are gentler on the skin. You should also wear gloves to avoid contact with skin irritants while cleaning.

#### **Hydrate the Skin**

Apply a generous amount of a gentle, hypoallergenic moisturizer to your skin 2–3 times per day to lock in moisture and relieve itching. Try a cream with calendula extract, as this herb is known to soothe skin inflammation and increase hydration. You could alternatively make your own eczema cream as well.

You may find it helpful to put a humidifier in the bedroom and living room, especially if you have an air-conditioner or central heating.

Don't wash too often, and avoid soaking in water for long periods. This advice might sound strange, but over-washing dries out your skin. You should also make sure your bath or shower water is not hot.

#### **Address Diet and Lifestyle**

Avoid common food triggers like soy, eggs, milk, nuts, and gluten by reading food labels. An anti-inflammatory diet may help to alleviate an eczema rash, so aim to eat more fatty fish, whole grains, seeds, berries, olive oil, coconut oil, and brightly colored vegetables.

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You can use daily supplements with omega-3 fish oil, as it is anti-inflammatory and has been shown to reduce the symptoms of this condition.

Identify mental and emotional stressors and manage them by doing meditation, yoga, breathing exercises or talking to someone.

### **Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medication**

An eczema rash that is caused by an infection or has become infected may call for a visit to the doctor. An antibiotic or anti-parasitic treatment may be prescribed.

If chronic itching is preventing you from sleeping and causing you to scratch the rash persistently, you can try an over-the-counter antihistamine tablet or topical cream.

### **Conclusion**

An eczema rash is a common issue that up to 10% of the population is faced with, and it can have devastating effects on a person's physical and emotional well being. If you are suffering from a chronic or acute eczema rash and feel helpless, remember that the right lifestyle changes can help you regain a good quality of life.