

People with eczema often find themselves desperately searching for a magical cure.

The reality is there is no cure but there are a number of emollients, moisturisers and creams that may provide relief and help manage the condition. Every individual's circumstances are unique so what works for one person may not work for another. As frustrating as it may be, trial and error is often required.



EMOLLIENTS

Emollients are medical moisturisers that form a vital part of therapy for all dry skin conditions. Unlike cosmetic moisturisers, they are unperfumed and do not have 'anti-ageing' additives. Along with helping soothe the skin and providing relief from itchiness and dryness, regular use can prevent eczema from 'flaring up'.

Emollients can come as creams, ointments, lotions, gels and sprays, with different types classified by how they are used and how greasy they are. Greasy ointment emollients are best for very dry skin, while sore and weeping skin responds best to cream emollients. To avoid a negative reaction, people with eczema should always test new emollients on a small area of unaffected skin for 48 hours.

Different emollients suit different people and it is recommended to try various types to find the one that works best. More than one type may also be required for different parts of the body or at various times of the day, with lighter emollients usually preferred during the day and in warmer months and a greasier one at night and when the weather is colder.



TOPICAL STEROIDS

Topical steroids are aerosols, creams, gels, lotions and solutions that contain corticosteroids and can be applied to the skin. They are a safe and effective treatment for eczema but should only be used under medical supervision as there may be side effects (eg: skin thinning) depending on the potency of the preparation, where it is used, the condition of the skin and the age of the user. Newly pregnant women should consult their GP to confirm continued use of their topical steroid.

Emollients and topical steroids can be used in combination, with no standard rules about which to apply first. The important thing is to leave a gap of at least 10 minutes (or 20-30 minutes if possible) to avoid diluting the strength of the topical steroid preparation and its potential spread to areas not affected by eczema.



NATURAL PRODUCTS

Many natural creams, lotions and oils claim to be good for eczema but not all are considered safe.

This is particularly so for skin products containing foods as research suggests it may contribute to young children with eczema developing food allergies. Plant and food-based skin products may contain ingredients such as oats, goat milk, nuts and wheat, with experts concerned that introducing the body to food allergens through the skin, rather than the stomach, can cause the immune system to mistake them as a threat and stimulate an allergic response.

ABOUT US

Eczema Support Australia provides support to Australians who are significantly impacted by chronic eczema and other atopic or allergic conditions. The registered charity believes all families and individuals living with these chronic conditions deserve our community support and is guided by the three pillars of: **1. Advocacy 2. Connection 3. Information**