

Tips and information for the staff

(school & early-learning centres)



Eczema Support
AUSTRALIA
- Your Hands to Hold -

Eczema School Kit



www.eczemaSUPPORT.org.au

Dear Parent,

This booklet is primarily intended for your child's teacher in school or early-learning centre. It gives hints and tips about the impact of eczema in a learning environment. Pass it on to the school/early-learning centre when you next discuss your child's needs.

Remember you probably also want a tailored written plan in place for your child. *Eczema Support Australia can help with this.*

Dear Early Years Professionals,

This booklet has been produced to help you provide the best learning environment for a child with eczema. It was originally written by parents of children with eczema and includes lots of information and tips about the condition.

Eczema is much more than dry skin and can impact greatly on a child's ability to learn.



For example, a child might be very tired if the itch is keeping them awake night after night. He/she might also struggle concentrating in class due to sore or itchy skin. Sometimes the child becomes very self-conscious because of their skin and are often teased by other children.

Eczema Support Australia are here to help! We have template documents and guidance on supporting a child's eczema needs in school/early-learning centre. In some areas we can also come to a school and facilitate a workshop on eczema. Just get in touch.

*"My eczema is like bees:
They fly about and they sting me,
ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch!"*



What is eczema?

- Eczema is an inflammatory condition of the skin. The most common form is **atopic eczema** and it mainly affects children but can continue into adulthood.
- It is a **chronic condition** which means there is no cure and it will recur. The skin becomes itchy, red, dry and cracked. It can bleed and become infected.
- People with atopic eczema often have other **allergic conditions** such as asthma or food allergies.
- **It is not** contagious or due to poor hygiene.

Eczema in Australia

10-30%

have eczema and the prevalence is increasing.

ABOUT 20%

with eczema suffer with the moderate to severe form of the disease.

THE IMPACT

The impact on life can be huge with sleepless nights, days off school, time-consuming treatments, isolation and problems with mental health.



The effects of eczema on learning and play

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

TIREDNESS DISCOMFORT

SLOWER PACE OF WORK

POOR CONCENTRATION

LATE ARRIVALS EMBARRASSMENT

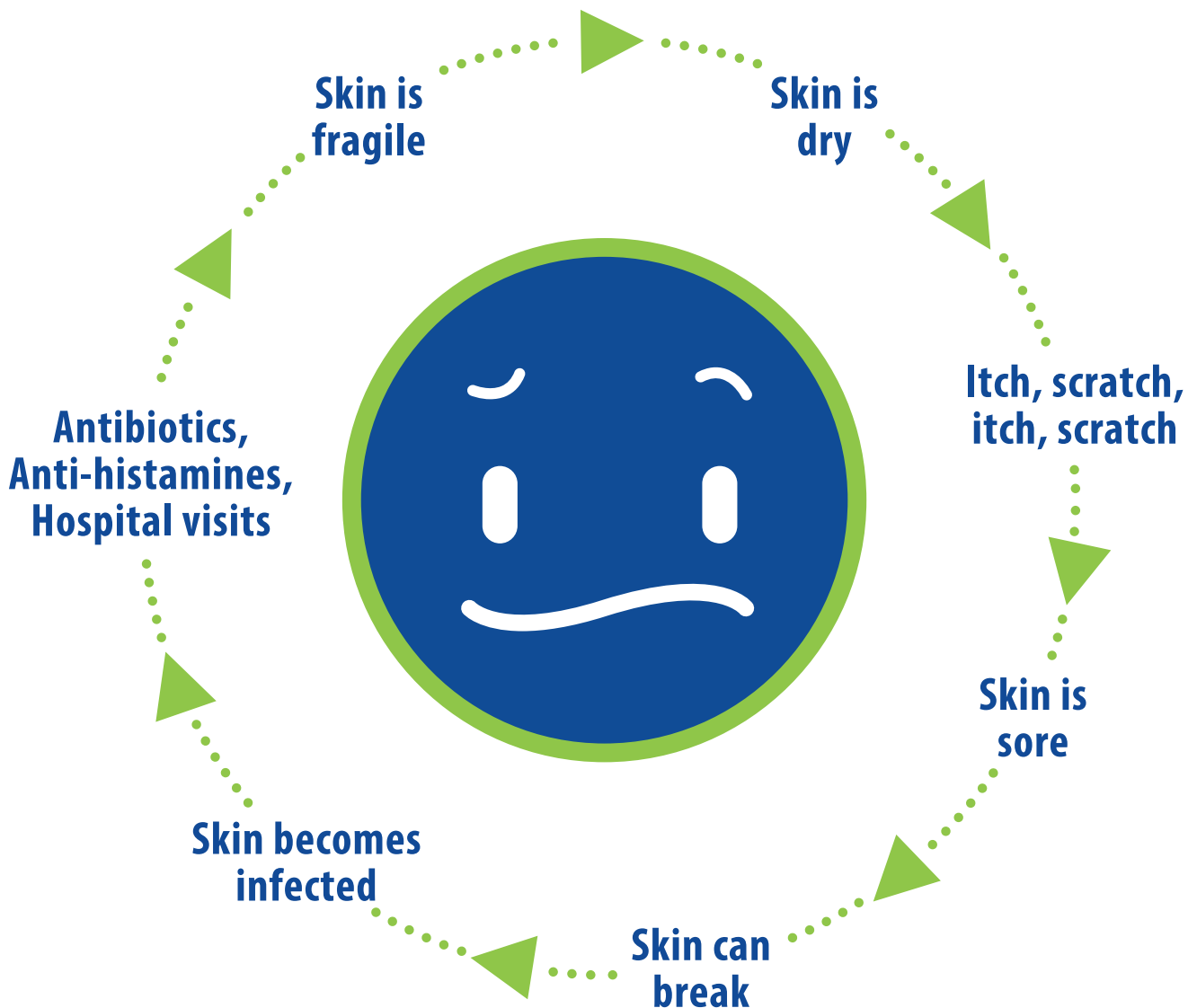
FRUSTRATION TEARFULNESS SHYNESS

- **Sleep-deprivation.** Sleeping with itchy skin is very hard for the child and the family often starts the day with only a few hours of rest.
- **Stress.** Symptoms and treatment of eczema can be stressful. The routines (bath, bandages, creams, etc) are heavy and time-consuming and there is the constant worry of an infection.
- **Emotional and social consequences.** Low confidence and isolation can be some of the consequences of eczema, both for children and their parents/carers.



The itch-scratch cycle

The itch-scratch cycle highlights how the skin can deteriorate in spite of daily treatments to maintain it such as emollients (moisturisers), steroids, ointments or bandages.

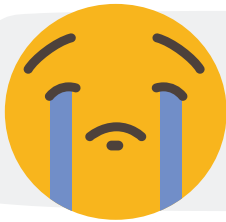


One stage doesn't necessarily lead to another in every child, however an awareness of these stages can help you understand how a child is feeling on the inside and how this affects their behaviour on the outside.



Common Triggers at School & Day-care

Life at School or at Early-Learning Centres can be a challenge for a child with eczema. Some products and foods used in the classroom can also spark or exacerbate the flare-ups.



Stress & Emotions

Anxiety about tests, homework, friendships, inclusion in activities, bullying because of eczema.



Certain Snacks/Food

For example: nuts, milk, dairy products, citrus fruits, gluten, chocolate.



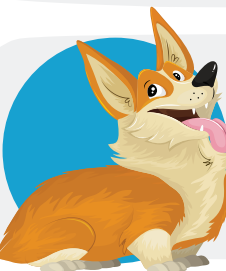
Room Temperature/Weather

Being too hot or too cold.



Common Products & Materials

School uniforms, face paints, lanolin, sand, bubbles, grass, play dough, colouring products, hand wash, sun cream, rough paper towels, diffusers, fragrance, scented wipes, hand sanitizer & insect repellent.



Animals/Environmental

For example; Pets in the class room as well as airborne allergens such as dust mite, pollens and even pet dander/hair on classmates.

- Always ask parents/carers about known allergies and triggers and tell them if you notice something new or have any concerns.
- Risk of skin infection is dramatically increased for children with eczema. Serious complications can result from exposure to infectious diseases. E.g. Cold Sores can result in Eczema Herpeticum, which can become a very serious illness. Viral infections can also trigger an eczema flare.



You can help



As an Early Years Professional, you can develop some simple strategies which can greatly help maintain the child's well-being and reassure their parents/carers. Here are some ideas:

- **Discuss the child's Eczema Care Plan** provided by the parents/care-givers, to better support their eczema needs.
- **Be open to assist** with the child's skincare routine to ensure they are comfortable.
- **Speak to the parents beforehand** if you are unsure whether an activity is suitable for a child or not, so the child is not left out.
- **Be aware** that some school products may trigger eczema, eg. Soap can contain harsh substances such as alcohol and perfume (parents may be able to provide soap substitutes).
- **Protect the child's hands** with non-latex gloves during messy play or painting if these trigger their eczema.
- **Check for food allergies/intolerances** and talk about alternatives with the parents/carers.
- **Educate all children about skin conditions** to encourage the inclusion of children 'who look different' (**Eczema Support Australia** can help with resources and in some areas may be able to facilitate a workshop).



Tips

Agree on a "signal" with the child

So they can let you know they are uncomfortable.



Saying 'don't scratch' doesn't help

They may have a distraction toy or maybe they are uncomfortable and may need cream.



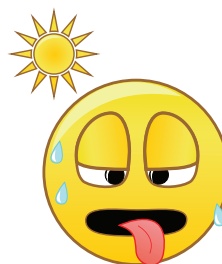
Be mindful of discomfort and tiredness

They might not have slept much due to itching.

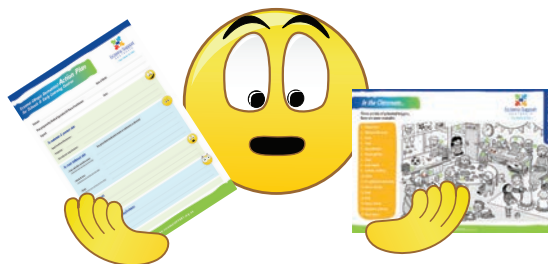


Temperature

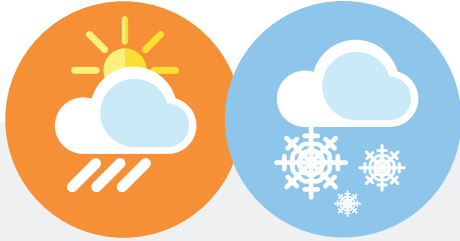
Use a fan or air conditioner if too hot.
Offer plenty of water.



Keep charts handy



How the seasons can affect eczema



Autumn & Winter

“Windy days are the worst as the dust, grasses and dry air tend to cause flare ups and irritate Matthew’s asthma and eczema.”

(Mel, Mum of Matthew)

“All the layers of clothing needed in winter tend to be a problem for his skin”

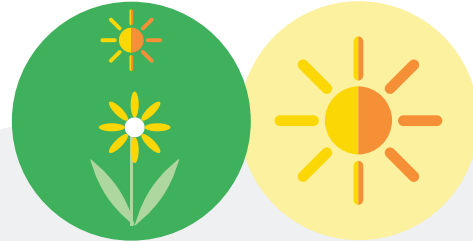
(Kate, Mum of Brock)

“Her skin needs so much more moisturiser in winter or autumn”

(Karen, Mum of Savannah)

“In winter, no matter how much emollient or moisturiser we put on her skin – it is just so dry all of the time! It’s noticeably dry too. This can impact her at school as you can tell her skin is different to her buddies.”

(Gillian, Mum of Vivienne)



Spring & Summer

“The heat itself is enough to cause inflamed skin, which he scratches until it bleeds. Then we end up with never ending Staph infections and a succession of antibiotics. It’s relentless!”

(Kate, Mum of Brock)

“Summer is bad. My eczema is hot and itchy. I get sores from just playing and this makes me sad.”

(Payten, Age 7)

“Emma’s skin is harder to manage in our hot summers. Sleeping is very difficult and air-conditioning is essential. Then there is the added problem of skin management at school after swimming lessons.”

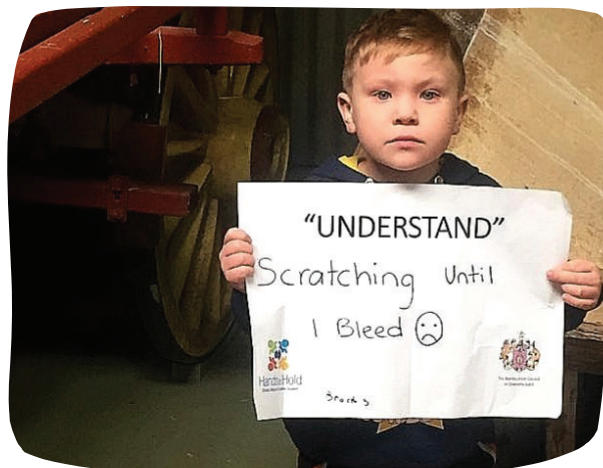
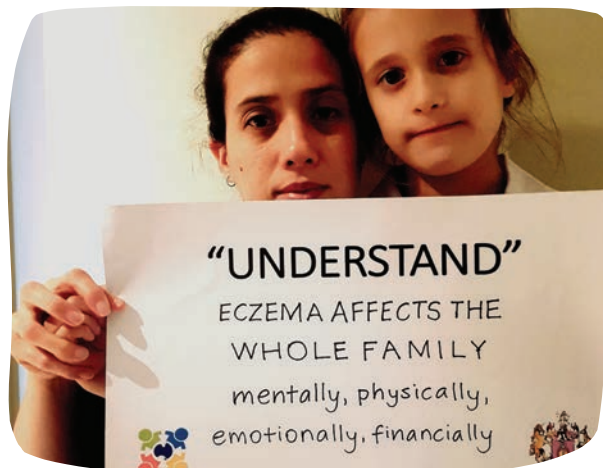
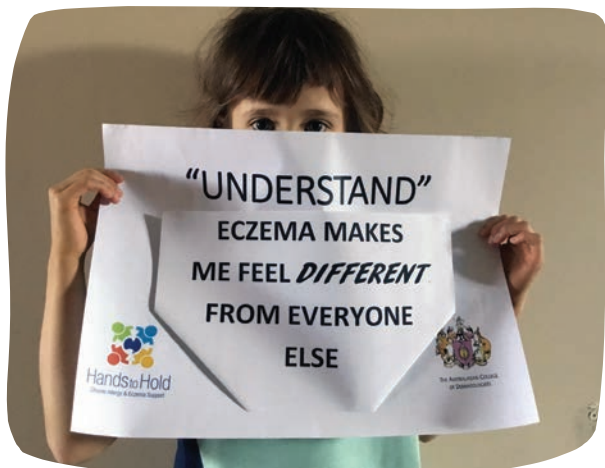
(Shona, Mum of Emma)

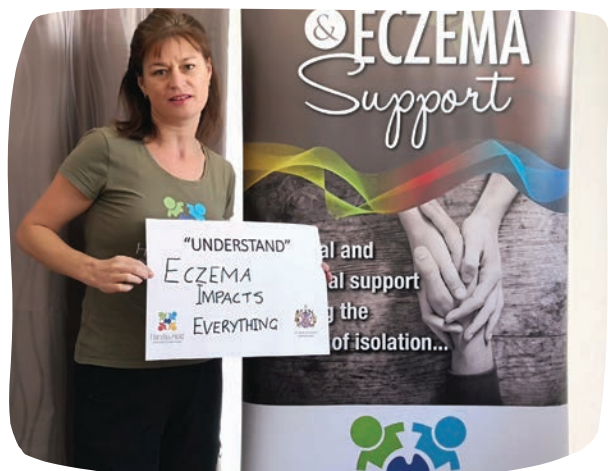
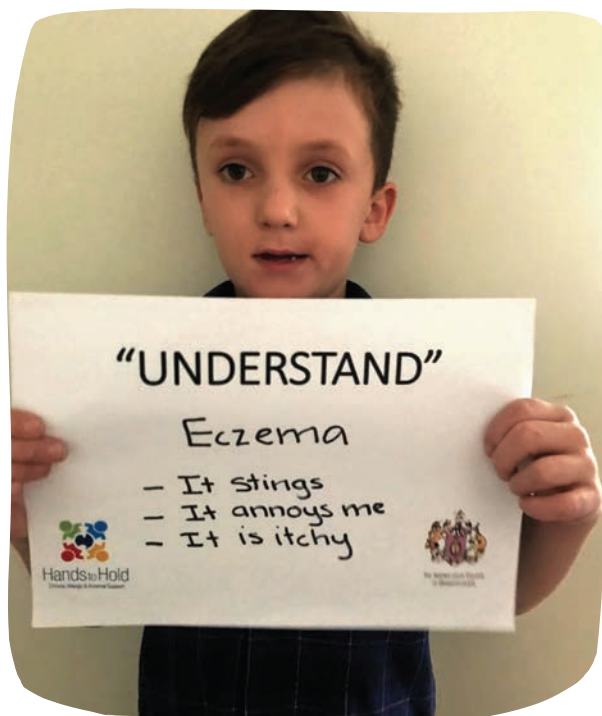
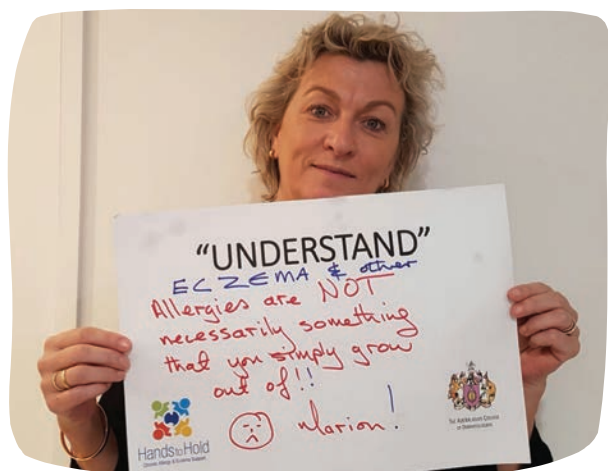
“With the heat of summer, Vivienne’s skin is just so agitated and inflamed all of the time. This obviously impacts sleep greatly – she can’t settle and wakes often. She’s probably also a bit angrier and distressed more in summer. Being itchy all over your body and having disrupted sleep being the main causes here.

(Gillian, Mum of Vivienne)



What we say...







Eczema Support

A U S T R A L I A

- Your Hands to Hold -

Eczema Support Australia aims to provide support to people in the Australian community experiencing a significant impact to their quality of life as a result of Chronic Allergic Diseases and/or Chronic Skin Conditions.

We aim to reduce social isolation, improve quality of life and overcome social and other barriers created by the condition, through a number of different activities, services and networks.

*Eczema Support Australia is a support network only.
Information received from a facilitator or a guest of Eczema Support Australia does not constitute medical advice.
You should seek independent medical or professional advice.*

To find out more please visit

 /EczemaSUPPORTAustralia  www.eczemaSUPPORT.org.au

Or contact us at

 contact@eczemaSUPPORT.org.au  1300 ECZEMA / 1300 329 362



With thanks to



EOS UK.
Eczema Outreach Support

For support & information



Reviewed by the
Australasian College of Dermatologists