



# Atopic eczema

**Atopic dermatitis (eczema) is one of the most common skin conditions. Around 25–30 % of adults and 10–20 % of children are affected by atopic eczema at some point in their lives. So, you are not alone with your symptoms.**

## Symptoms of atopic eczema

Atopic eczema is a long-term inflammatory skin condition where the skin becomes red and itchy. It is natural to scratch itchy skin and make it break. The skin can also feel painful. In long-term atopic eczema, the skin thickens. This process is known as lichenification.

Atopic eczema typically comes and goes. Sometimes the skin shows no symptoms at all. At other times, the symptoms become worse. When the symptoms increase, treatment should be immediately boosted to prevent the eczema from becoming severe.

## Impact of atopic eczema on daily life

For most people, atopic eczema causes only mild symptoms, and the prognosis is good. However, severe atopic eczema can worsen quality of life and self-esteem and bring challenges to daily activities and work. The itching can keep you awake at night. Poor sleep can negatively impact your mental well-being and energy levels.

## Treating atopic eczema

Atopic skin should be moisturised regularly with an emollient cream, 1–2 times a day. This helps manage the dryness of atopic skin. Additionally, the inflammation of atopic eczema is treated with medicated creams prescribed by a doctor.

Inflammation from atopic eczema is primarily treated with corticosteroid creams. If these are not effective, tacrolimus ointment or pimecrolimus cream may be used. In addition to medicated creams, your doctor may prescribe light therapy.

If these treatments do not help, long-term systemic medication may be considered. Systemic treatment refers to medications that are taken as tablets or injected with a needle, for example, under the skin.

Daily washing is an important part in the treatment of atopic skin. Wash with a cleansing liquid that has a pH of 4.5–5.5. Avoid hot water.

You can also use an emollient cream as a cleanser instead of a regular washing liquid. After washing, gently pat your skin dry with a towel and moisturise.

### Preventing itching and skin irritation

Itching is one of the most troublesome symptoms of atopic eczema. You can relieve it with, for example, an emollient cream that is kept cool in the fridge or with a menthol cream. Keep your nails short and wear cotton gloves at night to prevent scratching your skin.

You can reduce skin irritation by choosing appropriate clothing materials. Soft, smooth and breathable fabrics, such as cotton, silk and technical materials, are suitable for atopic skin. In the winter, merino wool is a good choice. Wear clothes that have as few seams as possible against your skin.

Avoid products with strong fragrances or harsh chemicals, as they can irritate the skin. You can also affect your skin's condition by adjusting the temperature and humidity in your home. An ideal temperature in living areas is 21–22 degrees Celsius, and slightly lower in bedrooms.

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### Support and advice for people with atopic eczema

You do not have to face atopic eczema alone; you can seek information and tips from professionals as well as other people with the condition. At events organised by your local eczema association and allergy, skin and asthma association, you can learn more about atopic eczema and meet others living with the condition.

You can also join the private Facebook group called 'Allergy, asthma & atopic eczema peer group in Finland.' In this group, you can share thoughts about your condition and living with it with other people who have atopic eczema.

The free advisory services of the Finnish Allergy, Skin and Asthma Federation can assist you in English if you have questions about living with atopic eczema or about social security.

Advice from a healthcare professional for people with atopic eczema:

**[allergianeuvoja@allergia.fi](mailto:allergianeuvoja@allergia.fi)**

Social security advisory service provided by a social worker: **[risto.heikkinen@allergia.fi](mailto:risto.heikkinen@allergia.fi)**