



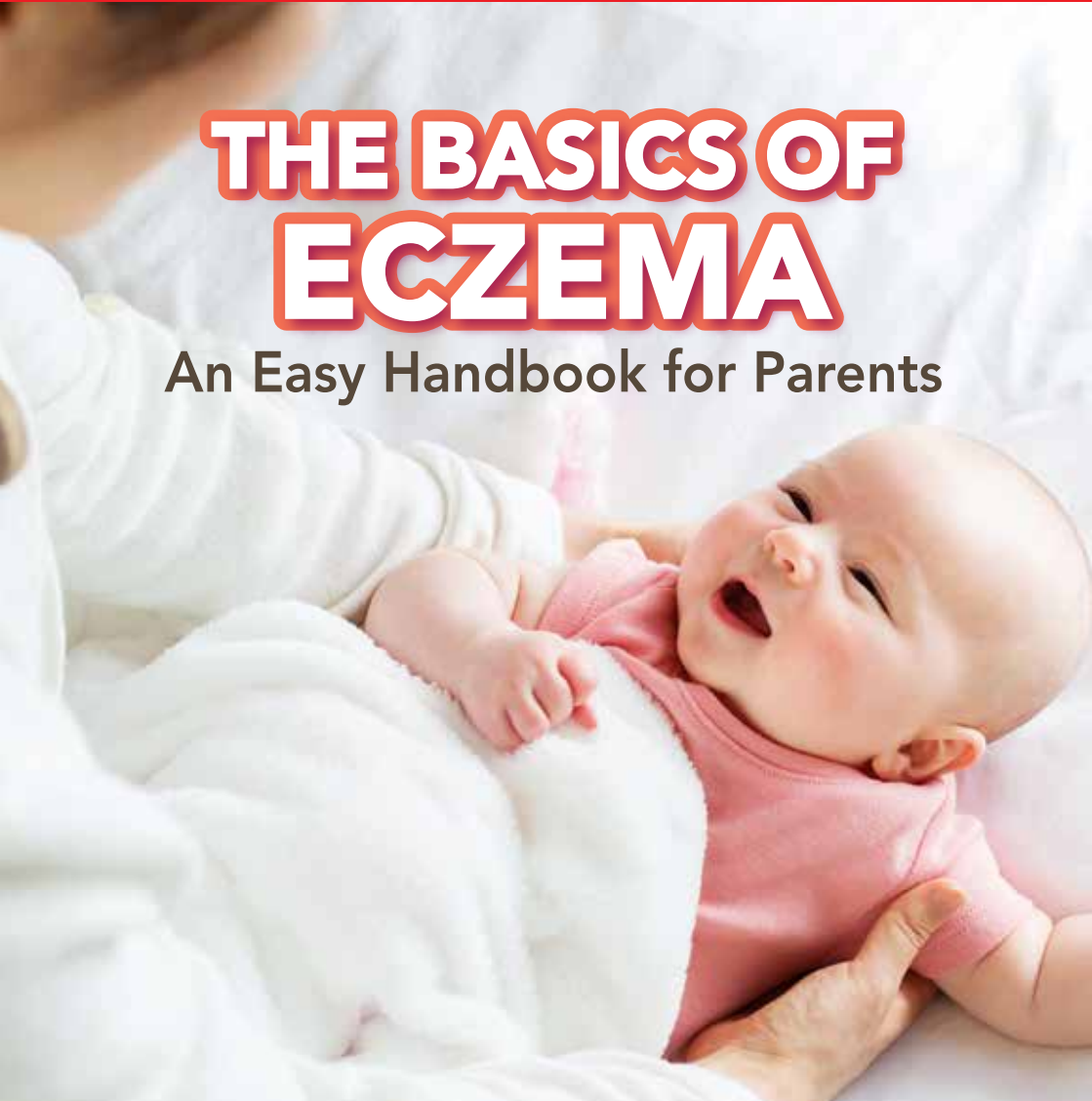
Positive Parenting Malaysia

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THE BASICS OF ECZEMA

An Easy Handbook for Parents



Positive Parenting is the official guide series on maternal, child & family care by the Malaysian Paediatric Association
www.mypositiveparenting.org

Eczema IS Manageable

Caring for an infant or child with eczema can be very challenging for any parent. It is one of the most common non-contagious childhood skin conditions and it can cause your infant or child much suffering. In Malaysia, approximately 1 in 7 children suffers from atopic dermatitis (AD). Children who have AD may also have other allergic conditions such as asthma.

While many children outgrow eczema, not all do. As there is no known cure for eczema, the only way to manage it is to learn how to treat and manage the condition to prevent flare-ups. When your child is old enough, teach him how to care for his skin.

This booklet will provide you with easy-to-read basics of eczema, and information on how to treat and manage it. Remember, you are not alone in caring for a child with eczema. We hope you will find the contents of this booklet useful and wish you well in your parenting journey!

Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail

Chairman, Positive Parenting Management Committee
Secretary-General, Asia Pacific Pediatric Association
(APPA)

Expert panel:

Dr Sabeera Begum Kader Ibrahim

Consultant Paediatric Dermatologist

Disclaimer:

The content of this booklet is not in any way intended as a substitute for medical attention. When in doubt, consult your doctor. Malaysian Paediatric Association, the experts and their respective organisations do not endorse any brands and are not responsible or liable for any advertisement or advertorial by sponsors.

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INTRODUCTION

Eczema is a condition where the skin becomes inflamed or irritated. While the most common cause is atopic dermatitis (AD), there are other similar skin conditions.

Eczema can happen at any age. For infants, it usually occurs on the scalp and face, and may also appear on the body, arms or legs. It does not normally appear in the diaper area. With young children, eczema may appear on elbow creases, the back of the knees, neck, or around the eyes.

The exact cause of eczema is unknown, but it is more common in families with a history of the condition. It is believed that some people are more genetically predisposed to eczema and other allergies. If you are uncertain whether your child has eczema, consult a paediatrician for confirmation and advice on what to do.

RECOGNISING ECZEMA

A flare-up normally refers to a bad episode of eczema. Some of the common signs and symptoms to look out for are:

- Red and scaly patches that itch severely.
- Tiny/fine blisters.



If left uncontrolled, incessant scratching will cause additional problems as the fingernails will break the skin, causing open sores or cracks that increase the risk of inflammation or infection.



Consult a doctor immediately if your child:

- Suffers so much discomfort because of his skin condition that it affects his sleep or daily activities.
- Develops a fever.
- Has skin that appears inflamed, i.e. reddish skin, feels warm to the touch at/around the inflamed area.
- Develops a skin infection, e.g. reddish streaks on the skin, pus, or yellowish scabs.



WHAT TRIGGERS ECZEMA?

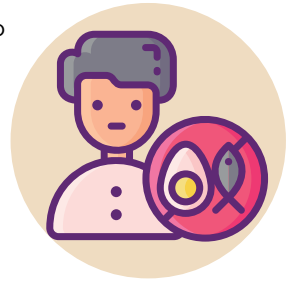
There are several things that can trigger eczema and cause a flare-up. These are:



Irritants. Anything that irritates the skin. It could be a certain type of soap, skin product, or clothing material (e.g. wool, rough fabrics, etc). They can physically irritate his already-sensitive skin, causing it to be further inflamed.

Allergens. These are normally harmless substances – if he has allergies, his body's immune system may overreact to certain allergens. This can cause not just an allergic reaction but could also lead to an eczema flare-up. In the case of food allergies, reactions may not be immediate, and could be delayed by hours or even up to two days later.

Your doctor will recommend a suitable allergy test to determine his allergy triggers (allergens) and you should keep a food diary. The food diary is useful when you see a doctor as it will help him/her to determine the possible foods that trigger the allergy. **DO NOT** avoid food blindly before consulting a doctor; he/she will provide appropriate dietary advice.



Environmental factors. This includes sensitivity to allergens or certain chemicals, e.g. cigarette smoke, household cleaning products, fragrances, weather (hot weather may cause excessive sweating), humidity (sleeping in an air-conditioned room may lead to dry skin due to low humidity, etc.), household dust or contact with object surfaces in public (e.g. in school, at a cafeteria, on public transport, etc.)



In addition to being on the lookout for products for your child's use, do also pay attention to other products you may use personally and in the home.

- **Keep air fresh the natural way.** Air the house regularly – air fresheners or scented candles may contain chemicals that could trigger a flare-up. Another alternative is to keep potted plants indoors to help keep the air fresh, but remember to check whether he is allergic to them.

- **Check your toiletries.** Any skincare products you use should also be eczema-friendly as they will leave a residue on your skin. This residue can then be transferred to your child when you touch him. You may also need to refrain from using perfumes or body sprays for the same reason.

- **No cigarettes or vaping.** Smoking and vaping can leave a residue on your body and clothes. You may transfer the residue to him when you touch or hug him. So if you smoke or vape, now is a good time to stop!



Falling ill is another factor that may worsen your child's eczema, as it means that his immune system is not at peak condition. Any sort of bacterial infection may also worsen things.

DAILY CARE & PREVENTION

Living with eczema is possible – start by paying close attention to skin care. You should also keep tabs on your child’s surroundings – the air should not be too humid or dry, and the temperature should be mild (neither too hot nor too cold). Avoid taking long baths or showers and getting chilled after sweating. Refer below for more handy tips.



Selecting products

- **Choose clinically-proven moisturisers.** Opt for products containing ceramide (a type of lipid that can be found in the upper layers of the skin). Some moisturisers also contain prebiotics (i.e. food for good bacteria) to help nourish the skin’s microbial condition and maintain a healthy skin barrier.
- **What to avoid.** Products that contain fragrances, perfume or even those that are unscented may contain ingredients that can irritate the skin. You should also avoid products that contain dye or colouring. This applies to soaps, shampoo, laundry detergents, etc.



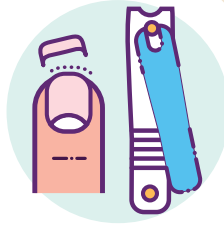
Moisturising

- Apply a generous layer of moisturiser on his skin within three minutes of bathing/showering.
- For moisturisers that have to be scooped from a pot or jar, use a clean implement (e.g. ice cream stick or spoon), and not your bare fingers to avoid contamination*.
- Moisturise his hands after he washes them, and reapply moisturiser as needed, especially if any affected areas are washed.

** Our skin contains a collection of microorganisms that live on it. When you dip your fingers into a container, you risk contaminating the rest of the moisturiser. Moisturisers with prebiotic properties will be affected by contamination.*

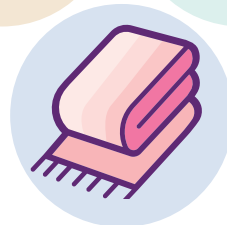
Others

- Always use prescription medication as directed. Prepare the skin by moisturising before applying any medication cream.
- Make sure his clothes are made from soft fabrics and that the material is skin-friendly. Cotton is preferable. Avoid wool or synthetic material such as polyester.
- Keep his fingernails short. You can put on mittens or gloves on his hands at bedtime.



Travelling tips

- Pack and carry your child's skin moisturisers. Larger quantities can go into checked-luggage. Pack small bottles for hand-carry use.
- Moisturise before boarding. Do also apply moisturiser as needed during the flight.
- Keep him well-hydrated at all times.
- Take any medication he may need, as a precaution.
- Bring along his towel, bedsheet and blanket. Avoid using those provided by the hotel as the detergents used for laundering may irritate his skin.



HOW TO HANDLE FLARE-UPS

When your child's eczema has been under control, but suddenly worsens, this is known as a flare-up. This may happen after being exposed to an eczema trigger. It is necessary to keep track of things used (e.g. soaps, laundry detergents, softeners, floor cleaners, etc.) so it is easy to trace and find the cause of flare-ups. For instance, switching to a different laundry detergent brand (followed by a flare-up after that) likely means that it is the cause.

Surviving flare-ups

- Use medication prescribed by his doctor (e.g. topical steroid formulation, anti-histamines) to manage flare-ups. Follow your doctor's advice on their usage.
- Use an ice pack to sooth itchy, 'burning hot' skin. Never apply ice directly. Wrap some ice in a few layers of cloth and apply it to the spot. If ice is not available, wet a piece of cloth and squeeze-dry before applying it.
- After bathing, pat him dry gently. Do not rub as this can worsen the condition. Apply moisturiser immediately after a bath while his skin is still damp.
- A wet-wrap may help provide some relief. Moisturise as normal after bathing, then wrap the affected skin with wet gauze or bandage and leave it on overnight to help 'seal' in the moisture.





Unusual flare-up treatments

There are also other unconventional methods, such as diluted bleach baths, and phototherapy. However, there are not enough studies to show that they are better than current methods. Do speak with your child's dermatologist before you resort to any of these unconventional methods of treatment.

Don't give up!

So, now that you know eczema and flare-ups can be managed, try to stay positive by focusing on the fact that both you and your child can get through it. Don't stress yourself out too much! Managing eczema can be challenging, but it isn't impossible! Speak to his caregivers or school teachers so they are aware about the condition.

Do continue his moisturisation regime all the time, even when his eczema seems to have subsided. With good management and a little luck, your child will not have to face a flare-up for a long, long time!

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Positive Parenting

Malaysia

Malaysia's
Pioneer
Expert Driven
Educational
Programme

Initiated in the year 2000 by the Malaysian Paediatric Association (MPA), the Positive Parenting programme offers expert advice and guidance by key healthcare professionals from various Professional Bodies in the field of maternal, family wellness, child health, development, nutrition and teen issues.

We understand the challenges parents face in raising a child, and it is our vision to bridge the gap between the healthcare professionals and parents to empower you with unbiased, accurate and practical information. Together, we can give our children the best start in life to ensure a brighter future.

Key Activities

Positive Parenting Guide



Published quarterly, it is distributed through healthcare professionals in private and government clinics, hospital and selected kindergartens nationwide, and selected retail partners in Klang Valley.

Website



Our one-stop digital portal with hundreds of articles, recipes and our E-Guide version.

Social Media

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to gain access to the latest parenting tips and updates.



Talks and Seminars

Join us in our Positive Parenting seminars featuring some of the nation's top Parenting Experts!



Educational Press Articles

Look out for our Positive Parenting columns every fortnight and monthly in Malaysia's leading English, Bahasa Malaysia and Chinese newspapers.



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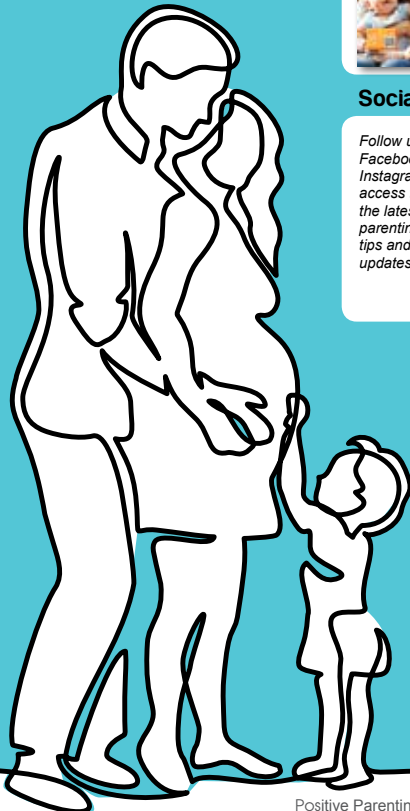
Malaysian Association of Kindergartens



Association of Registered Childcare Providers Malaysia



Malaysian Association of Paediatric Dentistry



Positive Parenting is a non-profit community education initiative. Companies wishing to support or wish to collaborate with the programme are welcome to contact the Programme Secretariat.

Tel: 03 56323301 E-mail: parentcare@mypositiveparenting.org

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