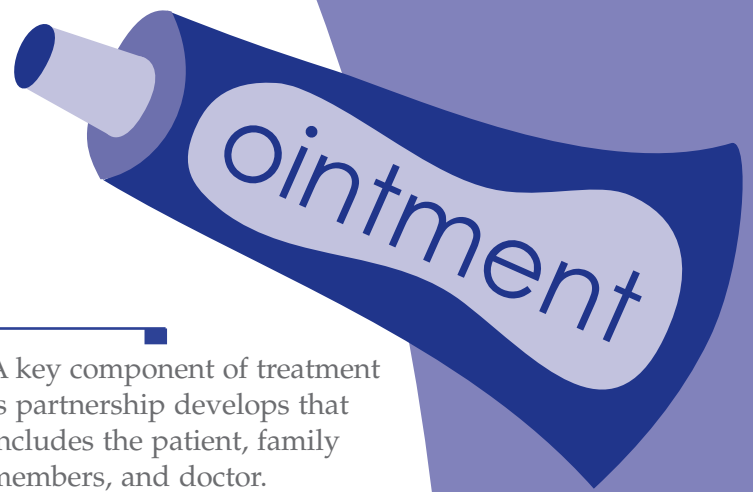


Patient Update



Identifying your itch

During the colder months of the year skin can appear dry, itchy and red. This might not be just the weather. Red, bumpy, scaly and itchy skin can be a sign of an allergic skin condition.

Two common allergic skin conditions are eczema and urticaria (hives). Knowing what they are and what signs to look for are important in the treatment of any skin condition.

What is eczema?

Eczema is an allergic skin condition. It is hereditary and is often associated with food allergies, asthma and/or allergic rhinitis. All age groups are affected by eczema, and it most often affects the face, wrist, inside of elbows and backs for knees.

What signs should I look for?

- Itchy, red skin
- Dry skin
- Rash that tends to flare up, then go away for a while before coming back

What is the most effective treatment for eczema?

- Moisturize frequently
- Control the inflammation with topical corticosteroids or topical creams
- Treat skin infections
- Avoid environmental factors that trigger allergies (e.g., pollens, molds, dust mites, and animal dander)
- Avoid sudden changes in temperature or humidity
- Avoid sweating or overheating
- Avoid irritants (tobacco smoke, pollution)
- Reduce stress
- Avoid scratchy materials (e.g., wool or other irritants)
- Avoid harsh soaps, detergents, and solvents
- Be aware of any foods that may cause an outbreak and avoid those foods

- A key component of treatment is partnership develops that includes the patient, family members, and doctor.

What is urticaria?

Urticaria (hives) is red, itchy, and raised areas of the skin varying in shapes and sizes. Hives are the result of histamine and other compounds that are released from mast cells. Hives tend to break out in clusters. Clusters of hives typically fade away and clear up within two to 48 hours as new clusters appear on other areas of the skin.

What signs should I look for?

- Red welts on the body that resemble mosquito bites
- Itching
- Patches that usually grow and recede in less than a day

What is the most effective treatment for hives?

- Avoidance of know allergens
- Antihistamines
- Oatmeal bath
- Injection of epinephrine- used if airway is swollen
- Corticosteroids – used in more severe cases

Many people suffer from allergic skin conditions year-round but if proper treatments are taken you can help reduce or prevent future outbreaks.

Whenever you have an unusual rash, make sure to contact an allergist/immunologist, who will work with you to determine its cause whether allergies, irritants, or another trigger.