ORAL AND INJECTABLE DRUGS FOR ATOPIC ECZEMA

ACE agency for care effectiveness

WHAT IS ATOPIC ECZEMA?

Atopic eczema (**atopic dermatitis**) is a common **inflammatory skin condition** that causes red, dry, itchy skin that can become easily irritated. It can occur at any age, but most people develop their first symptoms before the age of five.

Symptoms of atopic eczema can be different for each person and can range from being mild to serious. There may be times when patients have few or no symptoms (**remission**) and times when symptoms are more active (**flares**).

Flares can be **triggered** by cold or dry environments, sweating, stress or anxiety, rapid temperature changes, and exposure to certain chemicals or substances, including soaps, perfumes, cosmetics, wool or prickly fabrics, dust, sand, food preservatives, or cigarette smoke. Triggers can be **different** for **each person** and sometimes there is no obvious cause.

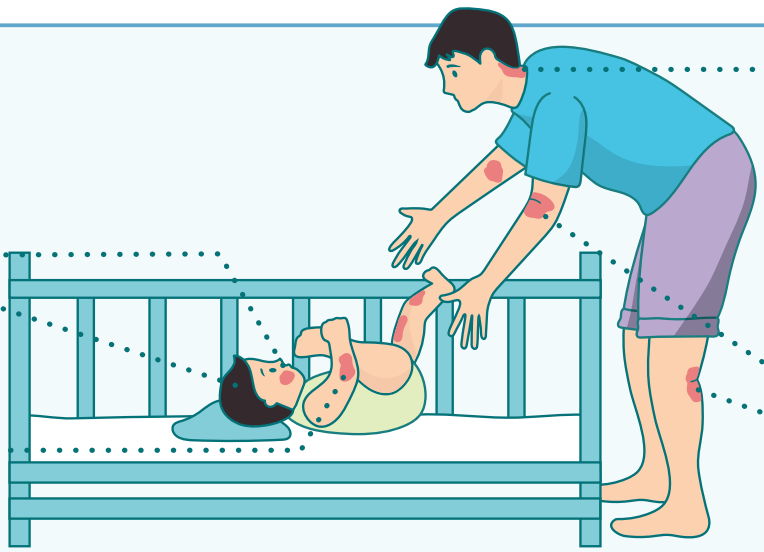
Common symptoms of a **flare** include areas of red (inflamed), dry skin, intense itching, small skin bumps and flaking of the skin. Itchiness may be worse at night, leading to more **scratching** that can cause **infection** or scarring. Atopic eczema can occur all over the body but commonly affects certain areas[1]:

Common symptoms of atopic eczema



Areas commonly affected in **infants**

- Cheeks
- Scalp
- Front of arms and legs



Areas commonly affected in **children** and **adults**

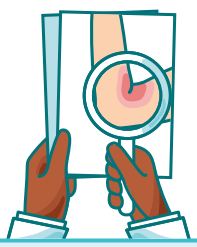
- Face and ears (children)
- Neck
- Elbow creases
- Back of knees

MANAGING SYMPTOMS AND PREVENTING FLARES

Learning about your condition and taking self-care measures can help to control symptoms and prevent flares[2]. **Self-care** measures include avoiding known triggers, keeping your skin hydrated with moisturisers and reducing stress whenever possible.[3] You can also control itching with antihistamines, and place **wet wraps** or bandages over affected areas to prevent scratching, lock in moisture and allow your skin to **heal**.[4]

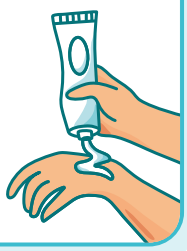
Learn about your condition

Understanding atopic eczema allows you to make informed decisions about your condition and actively manage it.



Practise self-care

- Avoid known triggers
- Avoid overheating
- Use gentle cleansers or non-soap body wash
- Apply a moisturiser daily - even when your skin is healthy
- Rinse off chlorine straight after swimming in a pool
- Use wet wraps to cool and rehydrate your skin



TREATING FLARES

Effective **treatments** are also available to treat atopic eczema flares and relieve itching. Your doctor will consider your age, severity of symptoms, skin areas affected by eczema, treatment preferences, and how the condition is impacting your daily life when advising which treatment is suitable for you.

Apply **medicated creams or ointments**



Take **oral or injectable drugs**

- Antihistamines (for itch)
- Conventional immunosuppressants
- Dupilumab, lebrikizumab and nemolizumab
- Abrocitinib, baricitinib and upadacitinib

Most patients who need treatment for their atopic eczema **start** with **medicated creams or ointments** to reduce skin inflammation and improve symptoms.

For patients with **moderate to severe** atopic eczema that does not improve with medicated creams or ointments, doctors may add on **conventional immunosuppressants** such as ciclosporin, to regulate the immune system and stop inflammation. If symptoms do not improve with these treatments or the side effects are intolerable, other drugs such as **abrocitinib**, **baricitinib**, **dupilumab**, **lebrikizumab**, **nemolizumab** or **upadacitinib** may be needed.

WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?

ACE reviewed all available clinical evidence and received expert advice from doctors and patients about the use of newer oral and injectable drugs to treat atopic eczema.[5,6]



Abrocitinib, **baricitinib**, **dupilumab**, **lebrikizumab**, **nemolizumab** or **upadacitinib** are effective treatment options to improve symptoms and quality of life.

These drugs may have different side effects. Please consult your doctor about the side effects before starting treatment.

SUBSIDISED TREATMENTS

SUBSIDISED

- Conventional immunosuppressants
- Abrocitinib
- Lebrikizumab

NOT SUBSIDISED*

- Baricitinib
- Dupilumab
- Nemolizumab
- Upadacitinib

Treatment costs are subsidised by **40% to 75%** for eligible patients[5,6]



*Not subsidised because their benefits may not justify their costs at the price offered by the companies

KEY MESSAGES

Abrocitinib and lebrikizumab are subsidised for certain patients with atopic eczema, making them more affordable. The treatment recommended for you will depend on factors such as your symptoms, response to previous treatments and preferences.

Talk with your doctor about which option is suitable for you and any concerns you may have. You can also speak to a **medical social worker** if you need further financial assistance for any treatments, or you can reach out to **local patient support groups**[7] if you want to meet with people with atopic eczema and share your experiences.

Sources

1. www.healthhub.sg/a-z/medications/eczema
2. ACE Clinical Guideline on *Mild and moderate atopic dermatitis (eczema) – a journey from flare to care ACG*, 2026
3. www.healthxchange.sg/how-to-manage/eczema/eczema-moisturisers-topical-steroids
4. www.singhealth.com.sg/patient-care/conditions-treatments/wet-wraps
5. ACE Technology Guidance on *Abrocitinib, baricitinib, upadacitinib and dupilumab for treating atopic dermatitis*, 2024
6. ACE Technology Guidance on *Biologics for treating atopic dermatitis*, 2026
7. Eczema Support Group Singapore

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