

STEROID PHOBIA FOR KIDS WITH ECZEMA NEEDS TO STOP

Today, The Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) has released a position statement on the use of topical corticosteroids for childhood eczema.

President of the ACD, Associate Professor Chris Baker says: “There is significant misinformation about the use of steroid creams to treat eczema in children. The ACD position statement provides needed recommendations to General Practitioners, nurses and pharmacists on the safe and effective use of steroids.”

Atopic eczema is a chronic inflammatory disease affecting about 30% of Australian and New Zealand children. Severe eczema costs over AUD \$6,000 a year per child in direct medical, hospital and treatment costs, as well as time off work for caregivers and untold distress for the family unit. In addition, it has a negative impact on a child’s sleep, education, healthy development and self-esteem.

Cheryl Talent, President of the Eczema Association of Australasia Inc says: “Although eczema in itself is not a life-threatening disease, it can certainly have a debilitating effect on a sufferer. Night-time itching can cause sleepless nights and eczema ‘flare-ups’ can often lead to absenteeism from school. Using moisturiser to prevent the skin from cracking or itching can offer relief, but the most effective treatment for eczema is topical steroids. Of course, it is important to seek professional medical advice before using any medication.”

Associate Professor Gayle Fischer says: “The advice given by dermatologists to parents of children with eczema on the use of steroids is unfortunately frequently undermined by misinformation among the general community, pharmacists and general practitioners. It is easy to find negative messages about steroids on the internet, but hard to find positive ones. The resulting ‘steroid phobia’ can lead to the poor treatment of eczema in children, further frustration to parents and continued discomfort for the affected child. There is a pressing need for the re-education of the community to not be afraid to use steroids and let them know that concerns on long-term adverse effects associated with steroid use are unfounded.”

The ACD guidelines state to follow product information and apply steroids once or twice a day to all the inflamed skin until eczema is cleared. Enough cream should be used so that the entire affected area is covered. The steroid cream should be used for as long as it takes for the eczema to clear and whenever it flares up again.

A/Prof Fischer says: “Steroids should be the first-line treatment for eczema. If you are concerned as a parent, please visit your dermatologist who will have a complete understanding of steroids, give current safety information and devise a treatment regime that is exactly right for each child.”

The ACD has also released a fact sheet and Q & A on the use of steroids to treat eczema in children.

A/Prof Baker says: “The fact sheet and Q & A provide practical advice for parents on the safe use of steroids to help treat eczema in their children. Our focus is to improve outcomes for the skin health of individuals and the community as a whole.”



References

E Mooney, M Rademaker, R Dailey, B Daniel, C Drummond, G Fischer, R Foster, C Grills, A Halbert, S Hill, E King, E Leins, V Morgan, R J Phillips, J Relic, M Rodrigues, L Scardamaglia, S Smith, J Su, O Wargon and D Orchard. Adverse effects of topical corticosteroids in paediatric eczema: Australasian consensus statement. Australasian Journal of Dermatology (2015) 56, 241–251

Links to further information

[Topical Corticosteroids and Eczema position statement](#)

[Patient Fact sheet](#)

[Patient Q&A](#)

[A-Z of Skin](#)

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About the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD):

The ACD is the peak medical college accredited by the Australian Medical Council for the training and professional development of medical practitioners in the specialty of dermatology. They provide authoritative information about dermatology to the general public.

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