

From the parent of Evie, a 10-year-old girl with eczema

“My advice to others with eczema is: see a specialist”

“My daughter started displaying symptoms of eczema at around six months of age when she would thrash around and scratch her head until it bled.

Our General Practitioner (GP) first suggested eczema but my daughter was formally diagnosed by the Royal Prince Alfred Immunology and Dietician clinic.

I felt hopeful when she was diagnosed because most people grow out of eczema so it would get better. I also felt relief as I had a diagnosis for why my baby was scratching herself to shreds.

The GP initially prescribed sigmacort, which did not work at all. The dietary changes advised by the dieticians may have helped. I also saw herbal specialists and chiropractors which didn't help. We didn't receive any direction in our treatment and continued down the wrong path and were not educated regarding the chronic nature of eczema needing consistent treatment.

My daughter became so unwell with infected eczema that we came to the Emergency Department. We were admitted under Dermatology, which is when we met the dermatologist who manages us now.

Our dermatologist is practical. She's very concise. Her advice is clear and concise which is what a parent needs. We receive thorough, accessible and consistent care with a consistent message which is reassuring.

My daughter is currently on Imuran and we do bleach baths three times a week. We still use wet dressings and emulsifying ointment occasionally, but we rarely have to use steroid ointment.

I feel like my daughter's eczema is getting better. We are using less steroids, have less infections and the treatment is much more convenient. When she was on creams and ointments it could be quite expensive so decreasing the cost has made things easier.

My daughter is now less emotional and less fatigued which means the whole family is as well. We all have an increased quality of life. My daughter has increased concentration and is improving academically.

My daughter is going on a regional dance competition which is nice. I don't have to worry so much about her treatment. She enjoys swimming a lot more now when we go on holidays. My daughter also likes shopping a lot more because she doesn't have to worry about covering up the rash. She loves Lego and really enjoys art and roller-skating.

I don't think people know about eczema. People are very affected by the appearance of eczema of my daughter's face and looking like everyone else is really important for interactions between kids. One day she came home from school and when I asked who she sat with at lunch she said 'no one'. I asked who she usually sits with and she said that she doesn't sit with anyone or follows the teacher around the playground. When I spoke to her teacher we discovered that the other students thought that her rash was contagious. With the help of the teacher we arranged a session for my daughter to educate her fellow students which helped a bit. She is much happier now and has a close group of friends now that they know they can't catch it.

Increasing the education of GPs regarding eczema and knowledge of when to refer patients for severe eczema would help. GPs need to listen to their patients. When they're coming back to you

again and again with no improvement in their child don't just send them away. People think that it will just get better easily, but if it's not then refer to a specialist.

My advice to others with eczema is: see a specialist, use wet dressings and keep a food diary. The wet dressings really help with the symptoms and the food diary can help identify anything that makes the rash worse. Anything more is taken care of by the specialist."