

How to protect your baby against eczema

August 22 2019, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Using a rich moisturizer, even an inexpensive one like petroleum jelly, is one part of keeping eczema under control. Now researchers have found that this skin care step can keep many newborns

at risk for the condition from developing it.

Eczema, or [atopic dermatitis](#), is the most common inflammatory [skin](#) condition among children. With [eczema](#), the skin's natural barrier isn't working correctly, leaving skin red, dry and itchy. It typically runs in families with a history of asthma and allergies, and affects up to one in five infants. The most common areas of the body affected are the face, neck and head. Note that eczema in children is more likely to appear in the bends of elbows and knees.

Eczema Symptoms

- Itchy skin
- Redness
- Dry, scaly skin
- Skin that has become leathery
- Tiny blisters that may ooze

Studies have found that moisturizing for six to eight months, starting within baby's first few weeks, can reduce their eczema risk. What moisturizer should you use? Researchers from Northwestern Health recently looked at seven over-the-counter moisturizers, including several popular drugstore brands, as well as plain [petroleum jelly](#).

The investigators found that petroleum jelly was the most cost-effective, but that even the most expensive product was a fraction of what the cost of eczema care would be. What's more, this has the potential to save baby from great discomfort and quality-of-life consequences. These include a higher risk of infection, [sleep problems](#) and, when eczema follows baby into childhood, even missed time from school.

More research is underway to see if moisturizing for 12 months is even more effective.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on [eczema](#) in children.

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Citation: How to protect your baby against eczema (2019, August 22) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-08-baby-eczema.html>

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