

# Mayo Clinic Minute: Eczema occurs in people of all ages

January 31 2022, by Jason Howland

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A prevailing misconception is that eczema is only a childhood skin condition. Atopic dermatitis, or eczema, is common in kids, but it also happens to adults.

Atopic dermatitis is a sensitivity disease of the skin, similar to asthma in the lungs, [hay fever](#) in the sinuses and food allergies in the gut.

"It's a multisystem disorder. Inflammation affects the skin, and the skin is more sensitive than usual," says Dr. Dawn Davis, a Mayo Clinic dermatologist.

It's a chronic condition and tends to flare periodically. The symptoms vary.

"Atopic dermatitis tends to be red, weepy, crusty, itchy, flaky patches, like oval or circular-shaped areas on the skin," says Dr. Davis.

The darker your [skin tone](#) is, the more the inflammation can be disguised.

"Our skin is like a brick wall. And over time as we age, or genetically if we are predisposed to sensitive skin, it can look like a wicker basket more than a brick wall. And that makes it more vulnerable to inflammation and to environmental triggers," says Dr. Davis.

Adult [eczema](#) often occurs in patches on areas of the body prone to friction or sweat.

"It might be where your waistband would sit or where your socks or shoes would rub. If you have a watch, (it might occur) where you would wear your watch, or if you have a headband or certain things that you wear along your neck, like a necklace or a tie," she says.

The first basic component of eczema treatment is taking care of sensitive skin.

"It's important to bathe regularly. It's important to hydrate the [skin](#) with a

moisturizer that is hypoallergenic. It's important to monitor for infection," says Dr. Davis.

If those self-care steps don't help, your dermatologist may prescribe topical or oral medications, or other therapies.

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Citation: Mayo Clinic Minute: Eczema occurs in people of all ages (2022, January 31) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-01-mayo-clinic-minute-eczema-people.html>

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