

Over-the-Counter Treatments for Eczema

Eczema treatment can go beyond prescribed medication. There are many over-the-counter (OTC) products which can provide hydration and itch relief, stop some skin types from becoming scaly and prevent skin dryness. Check out these four OTC products and see how they might work with your eczema therapy and treatment plan.

1. Lotions and moisturizers

[Lotions and moisturizers](#) not only provide relief for dry skin, they can help prevent or reduce a number of eczema symptoms. When looking for an eczema cream, consider products which were developed for eczema. In general you want to get body creams, hand cream, relief creams and body lotions that are anti-itch and contain eczema-friendly ingredients, such as:

- aloe
- glycerin
- humectants
- lanolin
- mineral oil
- vaseline
- ceramides
- petrolatum

2. Antihistamines and pain relievers

Atopic dermatitis (AD), the most common form of eczema, is part of what's known as the atopic triad (eczema, allergies and asthma). In fact, people with AD have a greater chance of developing comorbidities or related health conditions, namely asthma, hay fever and food allergies.

To provide itch relief and curb inflammation if you have allergies or sensitive skin, a healthcare provider may suggest antihistamines. Some antihistamines also contain sedatives that can help people sleep.

Examples of OTC oral antihistamines include:

- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl, Siladryl, Unisom, Banophen, Sudafed)
- Chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton, Wal-Finate, Aller-Chlor)
- Cetirizine (Zyrtec, Aller-Tec, Alleroff, Cetiri-D)
- Loratadine (Claritin, Alavert, Wal-itin)
- Fexofenadine (Allegra, Aller-ease, Aller-Fex, Wal-Fex Allergy)
- Doxylamine (Unisom, Wal-Som, Ultra Sleep)

To address common eczema symptoms such as burning, pain and inflammation, a healthcare provider may also suggest OTC pain relievers such as:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs including ibuprofen.

3. Topical hydrocortisone

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Topical OTC hydrocortisone cream is a low potency steroid and works on eczema-prone skin by reducing irritation, itching and inflammation. OTC steroids come in many forms, including ointments, creams, lotions and gels. They are used for the temporary relief of itching and rashes caused by most types of eczema.

OTC hydrocortisone is usually applied one to four times a day for up to seven days. Follow the directions on the label carefully. Do not use OTC steroids more often or longer than recommended on the label or by your healthcare provider.

Even though it's sold over the counter, hydrocortisone products may cause side effects including:

- Dry or cracked skin
- Acne
- Itching
- Burning
- Change in skin color

4. Shampoos

Medicated OTC shampoos with ingredients such as, ketoconazole, selenium sulfide, coal tar and zinc pyrithione help with symptoms of seborrheic dermatitis on the scalp (also known as dandruff). Try to find fragrance-free and hypoallergenic options when possible.

The active ingredients in OTC dandruff shampoos typically work by helping lift the seborrheic dermatitis scale from the scalp and/or provide an anti-fungal treatment to combat the overgrowth of a type of yeast called *Malassezia*. *Malassezia* is thought to contribute to the development of seborrheic dermatitis. Shampoos containing colloidal oatmeal, hyaluronic acid, shea butter or non-greasy ingredients are a good choice as well.

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