



ORAL AND INJECTABLE DRUGS FOR ATOPIC ECZEMA

WHAT IS ATOPIC ECZEMA?

Atopic eczema (**atopic dermatitis**) is a common **inflammatory skin condition** that causes red, dry, itchy skin that can become easily irritated. It can occur at any age, but most people develop their first symptoms before the age of five.

Symptoms of atopic eczema can be different for each person and can range from being mild to serious. There may be times when patients have few or no symptoms (**remission**) and times when symptoms are more active (**flares**).

Flares can be **triggered** by cold or dry environments, sweating, stress or anxiety, rapid temperature changes, and exposure to certain chemicals or substances, including soaps, perfumes, cosmetics, wool or prickly fabrics, dust, sand, food preservatives, or cigarette smoke. Triggers can be **different** for **each person** and sometimes there is no obvious cause.

Common symptoms of a **flare** include areas of red (inflamed), dry skin, intense itching, small skin bumps and flaking of the skin. Itchiness may be worse at night, leading to more **scratching** that can cause **infection** or scarring. Atopic eczema can occur all over the body but commonly affects certain areas¹:

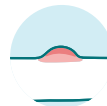
Common symptoms of atopic eczema



Inflamed skin



Intense itching



Small skin bumps



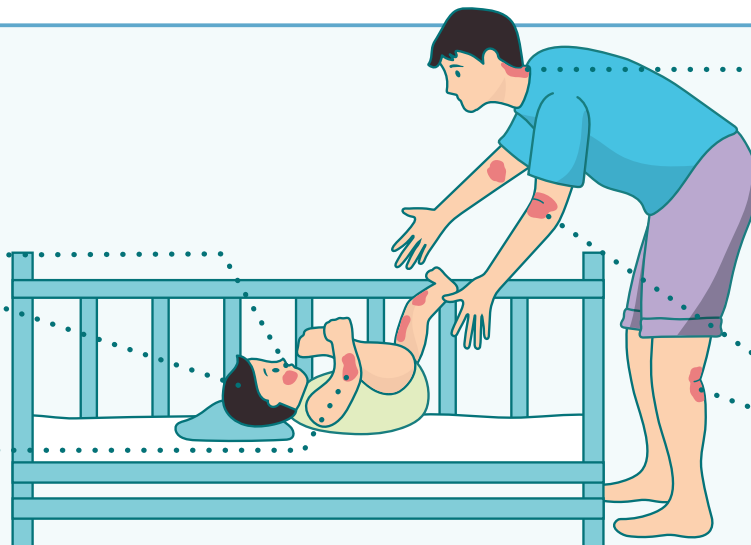
Skin flaking

Areas commonly affected in **infants**

Cheeks

Scalp

Front of arms and legs



Areas commonly affected in **children and adults**

• Face and ears (children)

• Neck

• Elbow creases

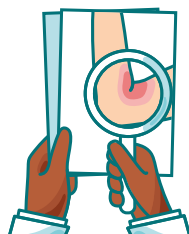
• Back of knees

MANAGING SYMPTOMS AND PREVENTING FLARES

Learning about your condition and taking self-care measures can help to control symptoms and prevent flares². **Self-care** measures include avoiding known triggers, keeping your skin hydrated with moisturisers and reducing stress whenever possible.³ You can also control itching with antihistamines, and place **wet wraps** or bandages over affected areas to prevent scratching, lock in moisture and allow your skin to **heal**.⁴

Learn about your condition

Understanding atopic eczema allows you to make informed decisions about your condition and actively manage it.



Practise self-care

- Avoid known triggers
- Avoid overheating
- Use gentle cleansers or non-soap body wash
- Apply a moisturiser daily - even when your skin is healthy
- Rinse off chlorine straight after swimming in a pool
- Use wet wraps to cool and rehydrate your skin



TREATING FLARES

Effective **treatments** are also available to treat atopic eczema flares and relieve itching. Your doctor will consider your age, severity of symptoms, skin areas affected by eczema, treatment preferences, and how the condition is impacting your daily life when advising which treatment is suitable for you.

Apply **medicated creams or ointments**



Antihistamines (for itch)



Conventional immunosuppressants

Take **oral or injectable drugs**



Dupilumab



Abrocitinib, baricitinib and upadacitinib

Most patients who need treatment for their atopic eczema **start** with **medicated creams or ointments** to reduce skin inflammation and improve symptoms.

For patients with **moderate to severe** atopic eczema that does not improve with medicated creams or ointments, doctors may add on **conventional immunosuppressants** such as ciclosporin, to regulate the immune system and stop inflammation. If symptoms do not improve with these treatments or the side effects are intolerable, other drugs such as **abrocitinib, baricitinib, dupilumab** or **upadacitinib** may be needed.

WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE FROM CLINICAL STUDIES SAY?

ACE reviewed all available clinical evidence and received expert advice from doctors and patients about the use of abrocitinib, baricitinib, dupilumab and upadacitinib to treat atopic eczema. ACE also negotiated the prices of these drugs with the companies.⁵



Abrocitinib, dupilumab, and upadacitinib are likely to be **better** than baricitinib to improve symptoms and quality of life.

All four drugs have **different side effects**. Please consult your doctor about the side effects before starting treatment.

SUBSIDISED ORAL AND INJECTABLE DRUGS FOR ATOPIC ECZEMA

SUBSIDISED

- ✓ Conventional immunosuppressants
- ✓ Abrocitinib*

NOT SUBSIDISED

- ✗ Baricitinib
- ✗ Dupilumab
- ✗ Upadacitinib

* Abrocitinib is subsidised for patients with moderate to severe atopic eczema that has not improved with conventional immunosuppressants such as azathioprine, ciclosporin, methotrexate, and mycophenolate mofetil. Baricitinib, dupilumab and upadacitinib are not subsidised because their benefits do not justify their costs at the prices offered by the companies.⁵

Treatment costs are subsidised by **40% to 75%** for eligible patients



KEY MESSAGES

Many conventional immunosuppressants are subsidised for treating atopic eczema, making them more affordable. **Abrocitinib** is also subsidised for patients with **moderate to severe** atopic eczema that has not improved with conventional immunosuppressants.

Discuss with your **doctor** which treatment is suitable for you by considering the type of symptoms you have, if your condition has improved with previous treatments, your treatment preferences, and any affordability concerns. You can also speak to a **medical social worker** if you need further financial assistance for any treatments, or you can reach out to **local patient support groups**⁶ if you want to meet with people with atopic eczema and share your experiences.

Sources

1. www.healthhub.sg/a-z/medications/eczema
2. Tay YK et al., *Guidelines for the management of atopic dermatitis in Singapore*, 2016
3. www.healthxchange.sg/head-neck/skin-health/eczema-moisturisers-topical-steroids
4. www.singhealth.com.sg/patient-care/conditions-treatments/wet-wraps
5. ACE Technology Guidance on *Abrocitinib, baricitinib, upadacitinib and dupilumab for treating atopic dermatitis*, 2024
6. Eczema Support Group Singapore



The Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE) was established by the Ministry of Health (Singapore) to drive better decision-making in healthcare through health technology assessment (HTA), clinical guidance and education. It publishes guidances on diagnosing, treating, and preventing different medical conditions based on the latest research information available worldwide. This factsheet is not, and should not be regarded as, a substitute for professional or medical advice. Please seek the advice of a qualified healthcare professional about any medical condition. ©Agency for Care Effectiveness, Ministry of Health, Republic of Singapore. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this publication in whole or in part in any material form is prohibited without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.

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