

## Dealing with Atopic Dermatitis (eczema)

*Prepared for Covenant Pediatrics*

Atopic dermatitis, also known as eczema, is a dry, itchy skin condition that can lead to areas of marked scarring, reddening, and/or thickening of the skin. Some times this is caused by external irritants, but more often it is caused by allergies or skin that just does not retain the amount of moisture it should. When the skin loses its moisture it feels dry and may peel. The dryness and peeling lead to itching which causes more peeling and dryness. If unstopped this cycle can lead to serious damage of the skin.

The most common areas of skin involved with eczema are the creases in the elbows and behind the knees. In infants, however, eczema can affect any skin anywhere including the scalp.

### **Steps to alleviate eczema:**

It is very important to lessen the dryness and itching. If the root cause is stopped the cycle of itch-and scratch can be stopped.

#### **Take fewer baths**

Bathing leaches moisture out of the skin. Shortening baths and taking fewer baths is one of the most important things to help eczema. Showers are preferred.

#### **Use lots of moisturizer**

A 'heavy' skin moisturizer is preferred, one that feels oily in your hand. It is also best to have as few scents and extra ingredients as possible. One dermatologist advises, "If they're not slippery, you didn't use enough moisturizer."

#### **Use a very mild soap**

Nondrying soap is also important. Traditionally pediatricians recommend white Dove soap. This is even more mild than baby soap.

#### **Medical ointments**

There are many prescription and non-prescription creams and ointments for eczema. If you have already done all the steps above we recommend that you call the office before starting any new treatments. It may be necessary to evaluate your child in the office for allergies, nutritional problems, and he/she may require the expertise of a dermatologist.