GENERAL MEASURES IN MANAGEMENT OF ATOPIC DERMATITIS (ECZEMA)

With eczema, the dry skin predisposes to itchiness of the skin which in turn leads to the rash.

a) Fingernails should be trimmed short and cotton gloves be worn at night in infants.

b) Rehydrate skin by soaking/bathing in tepid water, followed by the immediate application of a lubricating ointment or cream (these should ideally be free of additives including perfumes and no Lanolin). Cheap preparations include Petrolatum, Hydrous Emulsifying ointment and Eucerin. Other good moisturizing cream includes Moisturel and glaxal base (lubricants should be applied within 3 minutes after the patient gets out of the tub to avoid evaporation of water absorbed into the skin). Bathing in hot water and scrubbing vigorously with soap should be avoided as this is irritating to the skin. It is best to have a bath in tepid water, avoid excessive use of soap (hypoallergenic non-scented soaps may be used eg. Aveeno, Ivory, Dove) and pat dry with an absorbent towel.

c) When oozing and weepy rash is present, initial wraps/soaks with Burrows Solution (1:40) will avoid the burning or stinging sensations seen with bathing.

d) Clothing should be washed in mild detergent and double rinsed to remove residual detergent.

e) Non-occlusive, non-irritating clothes eg: cotton or cotton polyester blend (more cotton than polyester) is preferred (avoid wool and synthetic clothing).

f) Avoid excessive heat, as this aggravates eczema. Maintaining a cool environment is beneficial.

g) Any known aggravating foods identified should be avoided.

h) Stressful and anxiety creating situations should be avoided.

i) Skin infection may lead to worsening of the eczema and also may account for the poor response to topical steroid creams. The child may need a course of oral antibiotic with skin infection.

j) If itchiness of the skin is not well controlled with the above, the child may need an oral antihistamine eg: Atarax (hydroxyzine) or Benadryl to help control this problem.

k) Steroid creams or ointments should be applied to rash as directed (after baths apply the steroid cream or ointment before applying the moisturizer). Once inflammation subsides continue to use the moisturizing cream regularly to prevent the dry skin - itch cycle.

l) Be careful with sun screen. Two acceptable sunscreens are Ombrelle or Bain de Soleil.