

An **eczema** flare up may be caused by different factors and will be manifested through dry, irritated skin. In some cases, there may also be itchiness that could be severe. The need of a quality cream or ointment is essential if you have eczema, as the skin will need to get supplements of natural oils and get a lot of moisture, so it can heal.

What to Look for in a Moisturizer

Moisturizers suitable for eczema should be hydrating. The cream may contain mineral oil, petroleum, petroleum jelly, glycerine and dimethicone (a type of silicone), which should be able to replace the natural oils that lack from the skin when this is affected by an eczema flare up.

Look for a moisturizer that is fragrance free and contains few or no preservatives. Remember that the most expensive option is not always the best. The fewer additional ingredients, the better.

Types of Moisturizers

Moisturizers come in three general types: lotions, creams, and ointments. **Lotions** are watery, often come in bottles, and soak into skin easily. They are popular, but they are not very effective, and should only be considered for mild skin dryness. For more severe cases, opt for creams or ointments.

Ointments, often sold in jars, are at the other end of the spectrum, being extremely greasy and thick (e.g. petroleum jelly). They are excellent for locking in moisture, and good for flares of moderate to severe eczema. Examples include *Aquaphor*, *Vaseline*, and *Vaniply*.

Creams are intermediate, being somewhat thick, but better at soaking into skin. They are good for prevention of moderate to severe eczema, or treatment of mild flares. They typically come in tubes and must be squeezed out. Good choices include *Eucerin*, *Vaseline Deep Moisture*, *Cetaphil Moisturizing Cream*, and *Vanicream*.

How to Apply the Moisturizer

The way you apply the moisturizer is important. The best time to apply the moisturizer is after taking a bath or shower. This will lock in the moisture and keep the skin hydrated. Some doctors recommend the “2-minute rule,” which involves getting moisturizer onto skin within 2 minutes of getting out of the water.

Apply the moisturizer generously, allowing the skin to absorb the cream. Apply several times per day, especially in the areas where the skin is dry and flaky. Use more moisturizer during the winter, as the dry weather will affect the skin.

Other Tips:

- The type of soap you use is also important, as a harsh soap can dry the skin. Opt for a mild soap such as *Dove*, or a non-soap cleanser like *Cetaphil*. Avoid unneeded fragrances and dyes.
- The bath or shower water shouldn't be hot; warm or lukewarm is preferable.
- Don't scratch or rub the irritated skin; it only makes it itchier, and can damage the skin.