



ENVIRONMENTAL PRECAUTIONS FOR ATOPIC DERMATITIS (ECZEMA)

Atopic patients respond directly to the control of external irritants and allergens, therefore, every effort should be made to avoid or at least, control this harmful environment.

1. Control the temperature. The room temperature should be kept on the cool side. Overheating induces sweating which can further cause an adverse reaction. Do not overdress infant or child for the same reason.
2. Keep the humidity, where possible, between 40 and 50 percent. The patient's skin is already dry, you don't want to dehydrate the patient. Further, it is good to use a humidifier in homes with hot air heating. Too much humidity can promote the growth of molds, however.
3. When it comes to dust, it is stressed that rooms with bare floors and the patients living quarters are vacuumed **often**, and **when the patient is out of the house**. If carpets are used, make sure that not only carpets, but blankets, and drapes are non-wool.
4. Avoid perfumes, deodorant sprays and insecticides.
5. There are other sources of the air pollution that should be avoided whenever possible:

- Cigarette smoke
- House dust mites - these should be controlled - regular vacuumed cleaning of carpets, curtains, and bedding. Using a plastic mattress cover helps to reduce house mite population. Also, to further control house mites, spray with a fungicide which destroys *Aspergillus penicilloides* on which the house mites feed.
- Animal dander

All the above sources of air pollution should be minimized, if not eliminated.

6. Avoid chrysanthemum plants, live fir trees (such as Christmas trees), paints, or varnishes in the house.

7. Cats, dogs, and birds are hazardous to the atopic patient. Desire for pets can be directed towards aquatic animals, fish, turtles, etc.

8. Other contactants that should be watched for are tomatoes and citrus fruits. If the patient eats these, frequent washing with lots of water, **without washcloth**, is essential.

9. Avoid new **rough** clothing. All cotton well washed is best. **No wool**.

10. Make sure child does not play on **rough** rugs or upholstery.

11. Use a less drying soap like Dove. Avoid Ivory soap.

12. Do not use **hot water** for cleansing. If water has to be used, make sure it is tepid.

13. Apply a moisturizer to the skin daily, once or twice a day. Ointments are the most effective. Lotions are the least effective. Creams are in between.

14. Control exercise - avoid sweating.

15. Avoid emotional stimuli - avoid sweating.

16. Use topical corticosteroids as directed by physician.

17. Common food allergens: Eggs, cow's milk, chocolate, cereals, fish, citrus fruits, and nuts.

If child is scratching his skin, use either a topical anti-itch cream such as PRAX or an oral anti-itch medication such as Benadryl. The dose of Benadryl is one teaspoon per 25 pounds of body weight repeated every six hours as needed.