

# Welcome to the XY Club!



Eczema is probably something you've had to deal with for as long as you can remember. It's just part of life. You might not want to think about it, never mind talk about!

But no matter how much you try to get on with things it probably pops up and interrupts your life every now and again. Managing your eczema flare is one thing but it might impact your feelings - being a bit frustrated, angry or low about your eczema is normal.

You might feel like you are the only one with eczema but there are lots of brilliant young people with eczema across the UK. Take a look at our website to see some of their stories.

## famous people with eczema



*Brad Pitt*  
(Actor)



*Kate Middleton*  
(Duchess of Cambridge)



*Adele*  
(Singer)

If you search for famous people with eczema on the internet these names pop up. There are also lots of YouTubers and bloggers sharing stories of what it's like to have eczema. It hasn't held them back and it doesn't have to hold you back either, you can do great things!



# Did you know...

## It's not your fault you have eczema

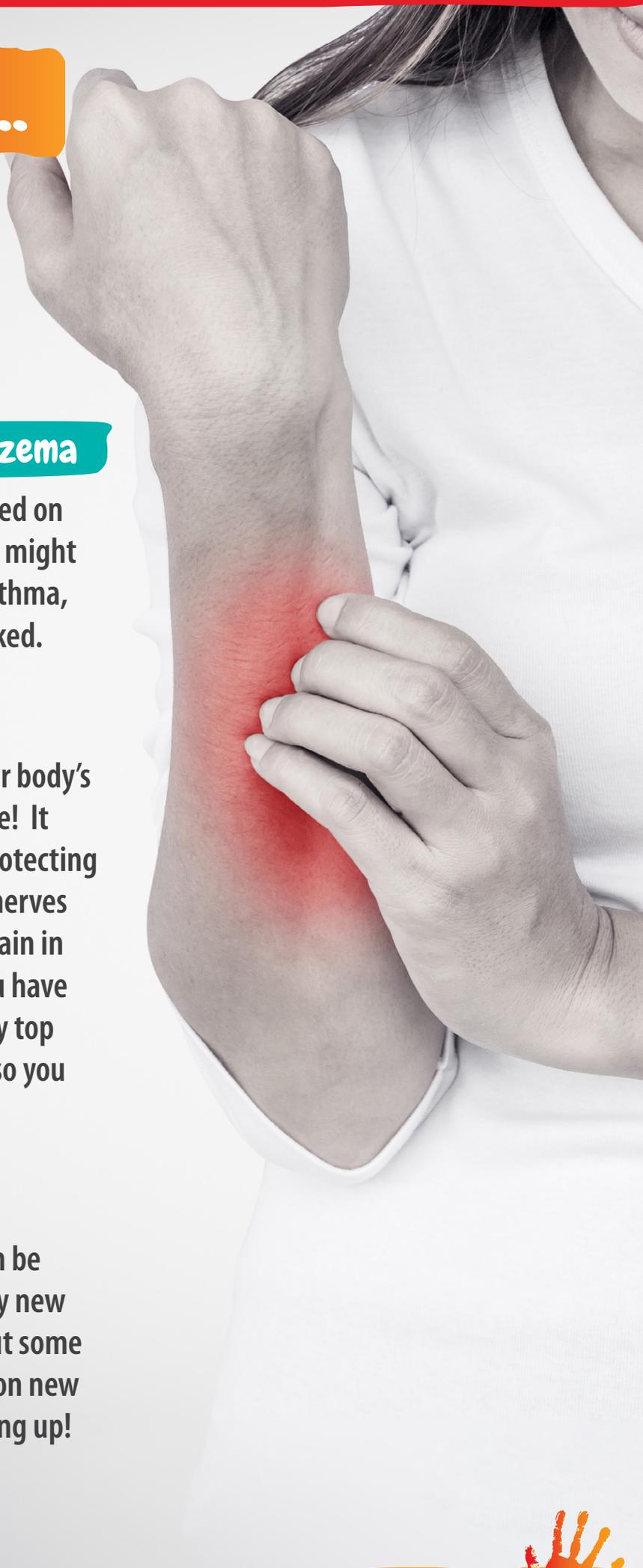
Eczema is complicated but it's often passed on to you through your genes. Your parents might not have eczema, but they could have asthma, allergies or hay fever and they are all linked.

## You might hate your skin

when it's flared with eczema, but it's your body's largest organ. Without it you'd evaporate! It acts as a waterproof, insulating shield protecting your body from harm. It is packed with nerves and acts as a huge sensor keeping the brain in touch with the outside world. When you have eczema the protective barrier on the very top layer of your skin doesn't work properly so you need to take extra care of it.

## There is no cure for eczema

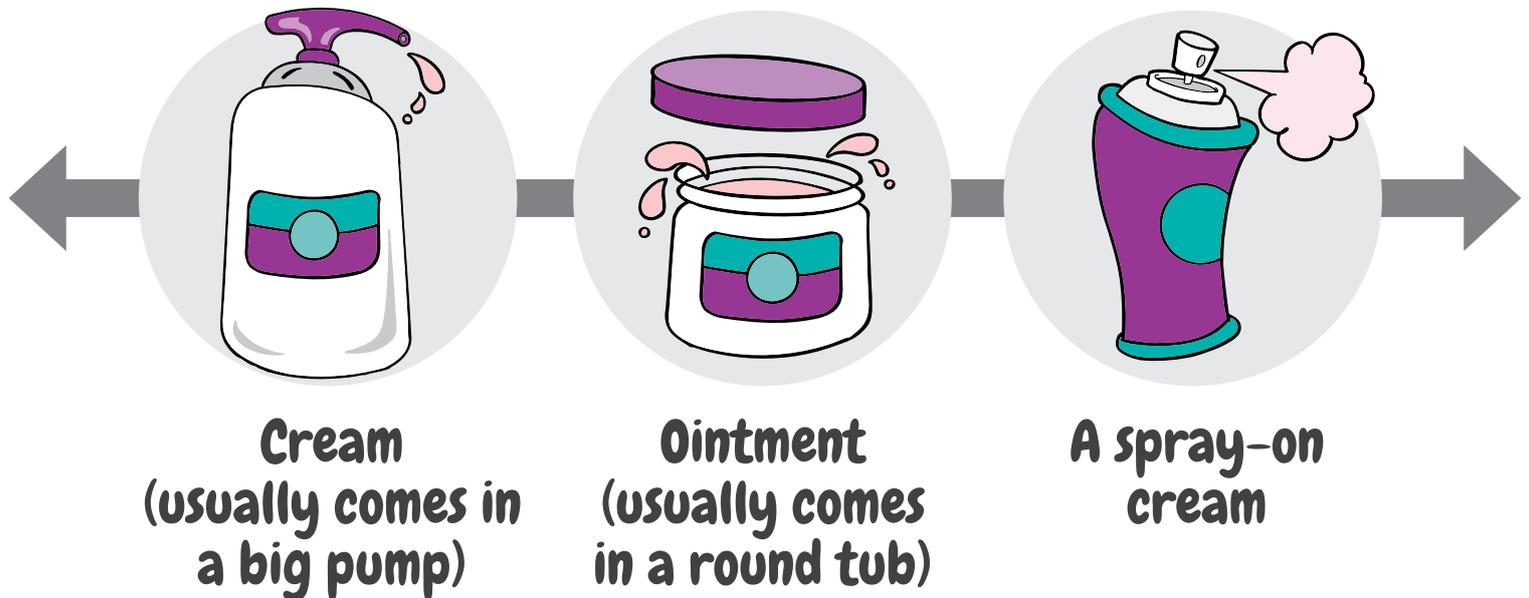
It will hopefully come and go rather than be bad all the time. There hasn't been many new treatments for eczema in recent years but some pharmaceutical companies are working on new treatments right now so things are looking up!



# Looking after your skin

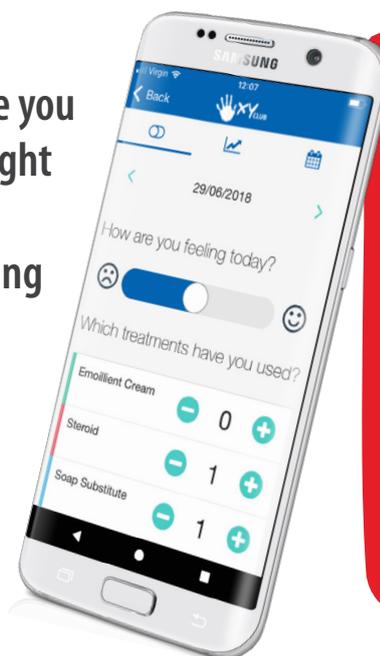
You'll know by now there is no miracle cure for eczema. Treating it can be a bit messy and take a bit of time. But, lots of young people have conditions they have to manage daily (e.g. inhalers if you're asthmatic and insulin injections if you're diabetic) so eczema is no different.

Moisturisers / emollients are the main treatment for eczema and your skin needs them at least a couple of times a day. They are really important because they help the protective top layer of the skin to work properly. Did you know there are different types of emollients:



You might have to try different ones before you find something your skin likes, and this might change over time. You can mix and match emollients e.g. use the spray after swimming or at school, and the ointment before you go to bed. Find a way that works for you.

You can use the app to keep track of when you put your creams on.



**\*Top tip:** try dotting the cream over your body and then smooth it over your skin using a downward stroke. You can cover your whole body in a few minutes and it's like doing a huge dot-to-dot puzzle! It doesn't need to be perfect.



# You might also use...



Steroid cream to put on the red flared skin. This comes in different strengths so you might have a couple of tubes for different areas of skin.



An emollient to use in your shower / bath



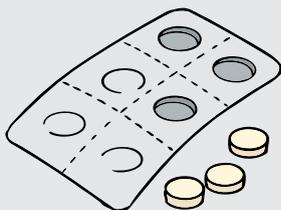
Garments, wraps or bandages to protect your skin

## If your eczema is stubborn and isn't getting better you might also have tried:

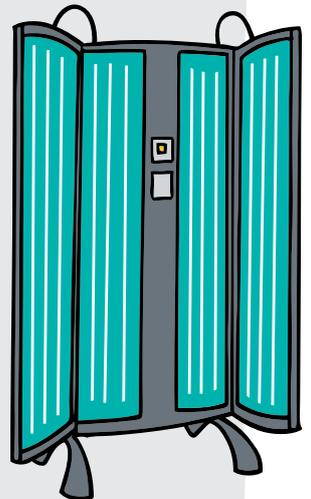


Topical Calcineurin Inhibitors look like a tube of steroid cream. You might have heard of the names Protopic or Elidel. They reduce inflammation in the skin and are sometimes used for sensitive areas of skin like the face and groin.

Phototherapy is a special type of light therapy. You attend a clinic 2-3 times a week for up to 10 weeks to get the treatment.



Immunosuppressant tablets are an anti-inflammatory medication. You might have heard of the names Methotrexate and Ciclosporin. You need regular blood tests and monitoring if you take this medication but it can really help some young people.



# Why bother?

You might be fed-up putting creams on or hearing your parents nag you about getting creams on. You might have stopped putting them on at times.

The world won't end because you stop putting cream on your skin, but eventually your skin might break down and flare up.



Skin with eczema can become infected and it's important you let your parents/carer know if you think your skin is infected. Don't be tempted to ignore it because it can become serious.

## What to look out for:

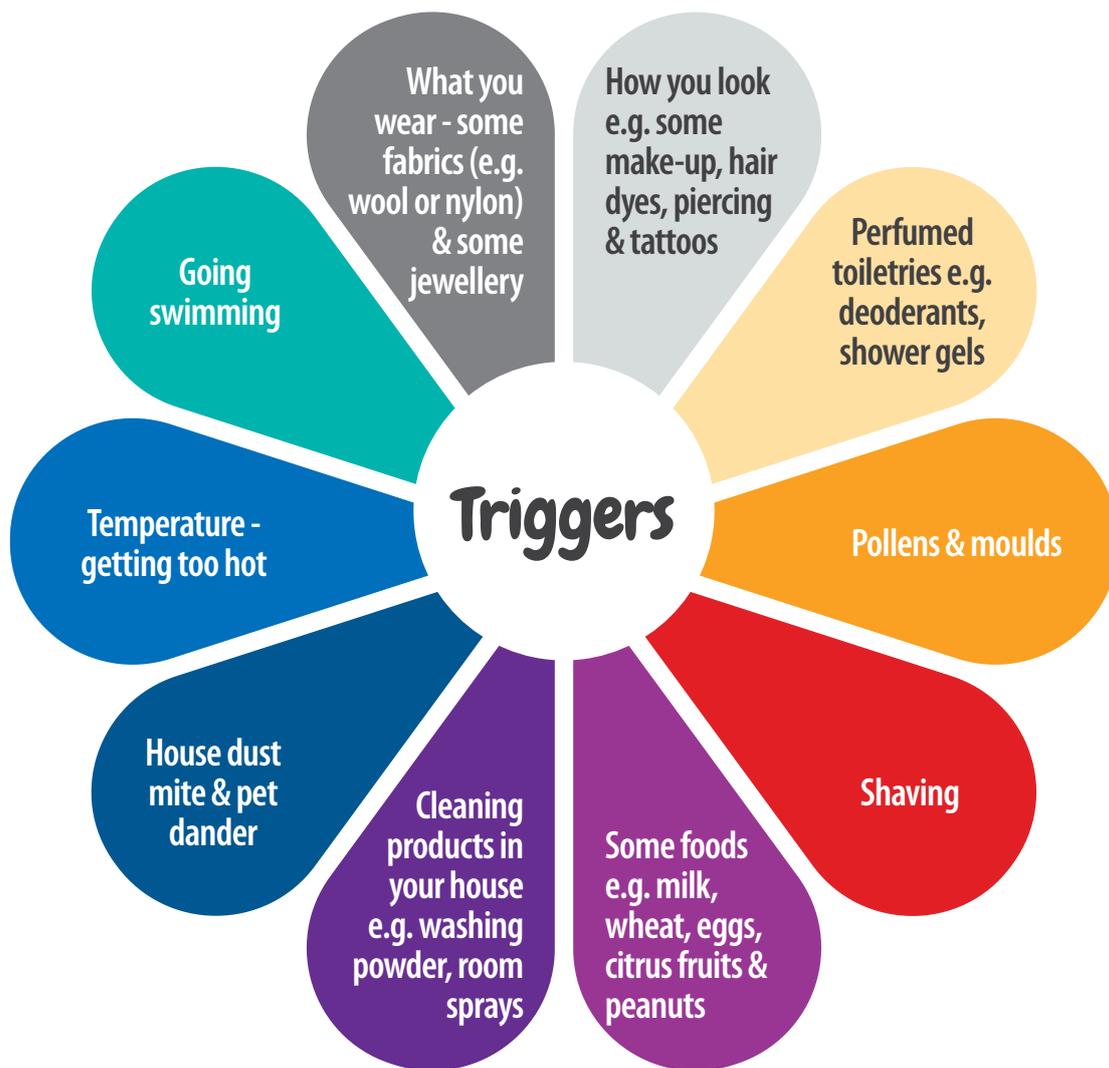
- Your eczema getting a lot worse
- Fluid oozing from the skin
- A yellow crust on the skin surface
- Skin becoming swollen and sore
- Having a high temperature and feeling unwell

It's important to keep your skin clean by washing regularly to avoid it becoming infected.



# What makes you itchy?

Things that make you itchy and cause an eczema flare are called triggers. There might be one thing that makes you itchy or lots of things, everybody is different. **Here are some common ones:**



Your skin is extra sensitive and it might be irritated by some things you want to do or use. You might have to try different products or adapt what you want to do to find something that suits your skin.

You might become itchy immediately when you come into contact with a trigger or it might be hours later. This can make it really tricky to spot your triggers.



# This is stressing me out!

You might have noticed if you feel a bit stressed your skin starts to get itchy and flare up. Lots of things can cause stress – exams or tests at school, falling out with a friend, or doing something new.

It can work the other way too. If your skin is flaring it can stress you out. You might worry about how it looks, be anxious that you can't get the flare under control, or angry that it's flaring again when you'd just got it sorted.

It's all a bit confusing because the link between your skin and brain is very complex and we don't fully understand how it all works yet.

Everyone gets stressed, but if you have eczema it's good to do things that help you relax a bit. Doing something you enjoy can be a good place to start e.g. watch something funny, listen to music, play a sport, read a book, or just catch-up with a friend who makes you feel good.



Have a look at our app for a playlist and ideas of what to do for when you feel itchy.



# Out and about

When you're away from home you can come across tricky situations. It may be harder to avoid your triggers, deal with comments about your skin, or manage to look after your skin.

## School/College

At school or college there might be subjects that trigger your eczema or are harder for you because of your eczema. If something is a struggle then speak to your guidance / pastoral teacher or course leader because they are there to help. You can carry cream in your bag so if your skin starts to dry out or flare you can sort it out quickly.

## Comments from others

Other people might make comments about your skin and this can be hard to hear. It's worth having a think about what you'd want to say to others and this will probably depend on who it is! If it's a close friend you might want to tell them about your eczema but if it's someone you don't know well you might want to say something short and then change the subject. Here are some examples but find something that works for you:

I have eczema, it's a skin condition. My skin gets sore and itchy.

It's just eczema & you can't catch it. What are you up to tonight?

I've got eczema, but I'd rather not talk about it.

## Staying overnight / Sleepovers

If you're staying away from home try to remember to look after your skin. Take your creams with you – you can put them in smaller tubs so it's less obvious. Maybe have everything you need in a separate bag you use for sleepovers so you don't forget anything you need.



# Take control

Trying to take control of your eczema is better than ignoring it, getting nagged by your parents every day, or worse of all your parents still wanting to put your creams on for you! Here are some ideas from some brilliant young people about small things they do to take control of their eczema...

When I feel really itchy getting the cool pack out the fridge and putting it on my skin really calms it down.

The spray cream has changed things for me – it's so much quicker & I don't even need to rub it in.

I try to nip or pat my skin rather than scratch it (it doesn't work all the time but sometimes it helps).

I don't even realise I'm scratching sometimes & the damage is done before I know it. Try not to feel bad if this happens to you.

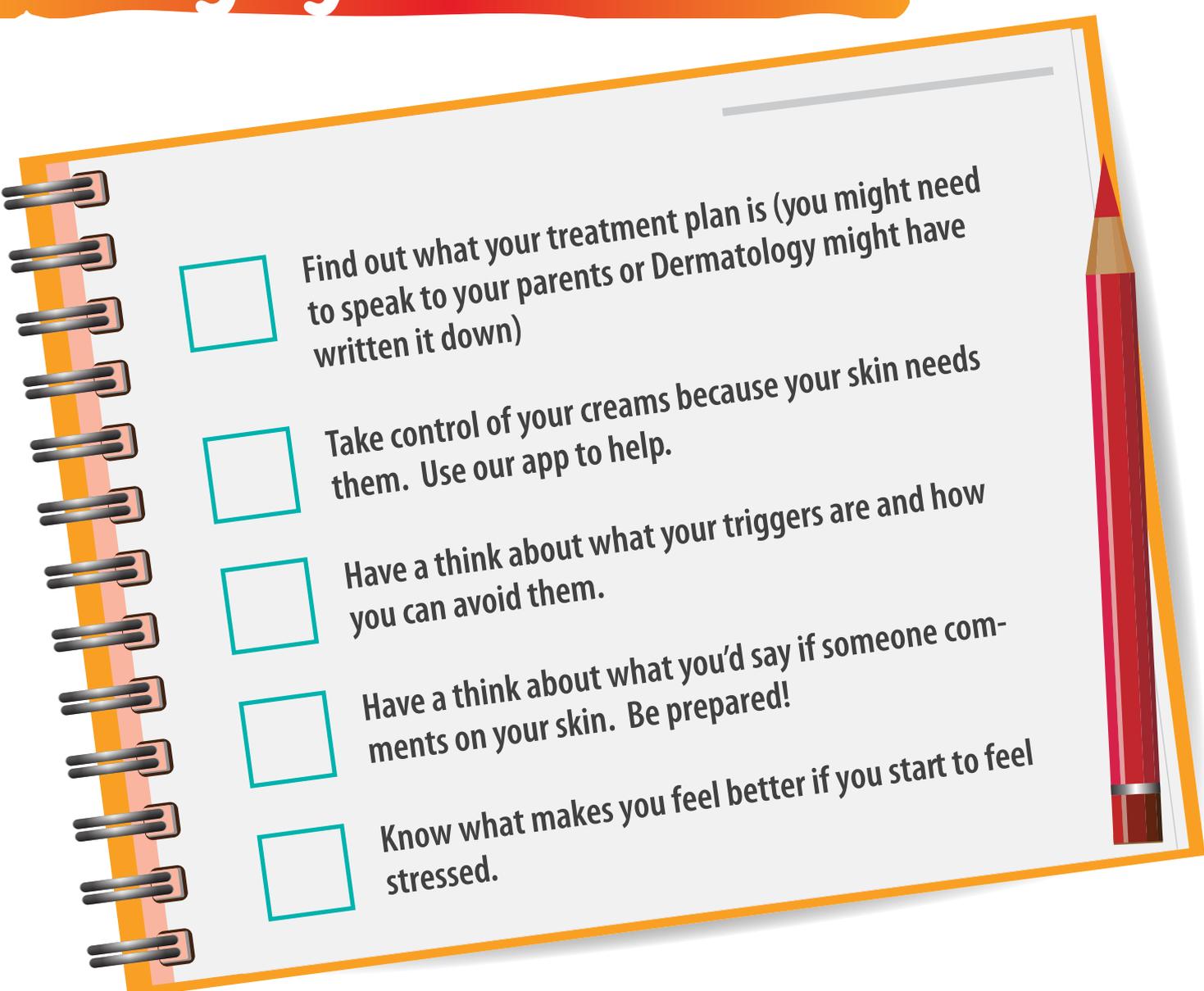
Spray your perfume or aftershave on your clothes rather than your skin.

Do a little patch test of make-up on your wrist to check it doesn't irritate your skin - some places have samples you can try.

Know you are awesome and eczema is just a part of who you are!



# Things you can do now

- 
- Find out what your treatment plan is (you might need to speak to your parents or Dermatology might have written it down)
  - Take control of your creams because your skin needs them. Use our app to help.
  - Have a think about what your triggers are and how you can avoid them.
  - Have a think about what you'd say if someone comments on your skin. Be prepared!
  - Know what makes you feel better if you start to feel stressed.

## More info

For great support and information for young people, check out these sites:

- British Association of Dermatologists  
[skinsupport.org.uk](http://skinsupport.org.uk)
- Allergy UK  
[allergyuk.org](http://allergyuk.org)
- Young Minds  
[youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)
- Mental Health Foundation  
[mentalhealth.org.uk](http://mentalhealth.org.uk)
- Mind  
[mind.org.uk](http://mind.org.uk)
- Childline  
[childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk)
- Kidscape  
[kidscape.org.uk](http://kidscape.org.uk)
- Respect me  
[respectme.co.uk](http://respectme.co.uk)
- Bullying UK  
[bullying.co.uk](http://bullying.co.uk)
- Barnardos  
[barnardos.org.uk](http://barnardos.org.uk)
- Young Scot  
[young.scot](http://young.scot)





# EOS

**Eczema Outreach Support**

The XY Club is part of the service offered by  
Eczema Outreach Support.

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