



# EOS

Eczema Outreach Support



Supporting pupils with atopic eczema

## Guidance

for speaking to school/  
nursery about your  
child's eczema needs

School and nursery can be a tricky environment for a child with eczema. Classrooms are often hot and there may be things that could trigger an eczema flare. It can also be a long time without getting some cream/emollient on to protect and moisturise their skin.

You can speak to your child's school or nursery about their eczema and put in place a plan to help (this can be formal or informal). There are many simple things schools/nurseries can do to make sure your child is comfortable throughout the day to learn instead of scratching.

You can use the template My Eczema Support Needs to help prepare you for talking to your child's school/nursery. You can also get in touch with us and one of our team will help you through the process.

## What to expect from your school/nursery

In our experience, some schools are very happy to support the needs of pupils with eczema but others can be harder to convince. Be aware of the following:



If you live in England, schools **have** to make arrangements to support pupils with medical conditions and they will help with your child's medicine/treatment. Schools in England put in place individual healthcare plans (IHPs) to ensure they support pupils with medical conditions. An IHP should be reviewed at least annually and should be drawn up in partnership with parents, the school, and a relevant healthcare professional. You may want to use the My Eczema Support Needs document to help prepare for your IHP meeting.



If you live in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland schools **are not** legally obliged to provide a member of staff to help with your child's medicine/treatment. Each country has its own set of guidelines and we have given you the details of where to find them later. However, it shouldn't mean your child will miss out on the support they need. Schools can, and in most cases do, have members of staff who are willing to provide additional support on a voluntary basis. You may find the My Eczema Support Needs template document a useful way to prepare and start a conversation with your child's school.



## Key tips

- Having a good relationship with your child's school/nursery is important, especially if you're relying on them to find staff to help your child on a voluntary basis.
- Use the My Eczema Support Needs template to help you consider what you'd like the school/nursery to do to support your child.
- Contact your child's school/nursery to ask for a meeting to discuss your child's healthcare needs. You may want to use your completed My Eczema Support Needs document as a framework for the discussion so you are clear about what you are looking for them to do.
- Schools may not be aware of the impact eczema can have on your child's quality of life and ability to learn so you might have to educate them. You can give them our **Tips and Information for Your Child's Teacher (Nursery and School)** document to help.
- Your meeting may be with the Head Teacher or another senior member of staff, however it's important that your child's teacher understands the condition and what they need to do. You can use the In the Classroom resource with your child's teacher so they know how to help your child.



## What should you discuss with the school/nursery?

It's important to give the school/nursery some detail about your child's condition. This will help them understand the impact that eczema has on their ability to learn and have fun when they are in school/nursery.

You may want to ask them to make small practical changes for your child if you know what triggers their eczema, or for them to help with their eczema treatment. Take some time to consider what would help your child when they are at school or nursery.



## If your child needs to take medication to school or nursery, here are some things to consider:

- What treatment will your child need e.g. emollient/moisturiser, soap substitutes, anti-histamine?
- How often will your child need treatment within the school day?
- Will your child manage their treatment or need help?
- Will the school be able to provide a private place for your child to have their treatment (not the toilets)?
- Where will the school store the treatment or will they carry some/all themselves?
- How will the school let you know if they need more medication for your child?
- Will you offer to go into the school/nursery to show the member of staff how to apply the treatment?
- If your child's treatment routine changes how will you inform the school?

You may find it useful to provide a letter from your child's healthcare professional (GP, Dermatologist or Dermatology Nurse) listing their current treatments or a copy of their treatment plan.

On occasions we hear that a school/nursery expect a parent/carer to go into school during the day to provide treatment for their child. This shouldn't be acceptable and in England and Wales the guidance clearly states that it is unacceptable practice to "require parents, or otherwise make them feel obliged, to attend school to administer medication or provide medical support to their child". If you find yourself in this situation please get in touch with us.



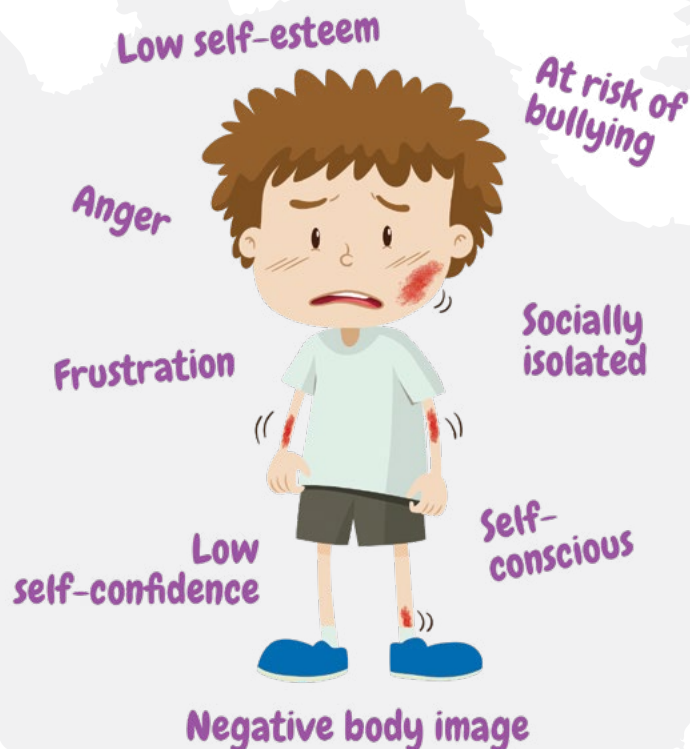
## Minimise the impact of triggers

There can be many triggers in the school/nursery environment so it's important to inform the school so you can find solutions. Triggers for your child's eczema might be different from another child with eczema and sometimes they can be difficult to work out. However, here are some common triggers:

- Your child's uniform may be uncomfortable e.g. wool blazers or synthetic trousers. Most schools will be open to children wearing clothing that is a similar colour to the school uniform but made in a material that doesn't irritate your child's skin.
- Messy play, particularly in nursery and early years of primary may be a trigger. You could provide gloves, ask the teacher to limit the amount of time spent on these activities, or ask them to wash hands with soap substitute and apply emollient straight after playing.
- Sitting on the carpet can be a trigger for some children. You could provide a cushion for them to sit on, or ask that they sit on a chair if the dust or material of the carpet irritates their skin.
- Hand washing in schools/nurseries can be a trigger because of the soap and rough paper towels. You can ask to provide a soap substitute (e.g. Dermol 500) for your child to use.
- Schools can be hot and the heat can be a trigger. You can ask that your child sits away from radiators and near any ventilation, or they may be allowed to use a small fan or a water mist spray to help cool their skin.
- Sweat can be a trigger so running around at playtime or doing PE can trigger an eczema flare. You could provide a change of clothes, use a water mist spray or a cold flannel to cool the skin.

### It's more than just itchy skin

For some children eczema can have a negative impact on how they feel about themselves. It's important that you communicate any worries or concerns you have about your child's wellbeing to the school so they can support your child in an appropriate way. Things to watch out for:



## Eczema can disrupt a child's learning so it's important the school are aware how eczema might impact your child:

- Tiredness caused by broken sleep is a big issue for some children with eczema. Scratching through the night can leave your child (and you) exhausted.
- Concentration levels at school can be impacted by tiredness.
- Children may be distracted by itchy skin when at school.
- Eczema can impact their behaviour – frustration, anger, itchiness, tiredness, and self-consciousness can be overwhelming for a child and result in challenging behaviour.
- Extended absence from school due to infections, badly flared skin, or medical appointments may cause children to fall behind.
- Late arrivals in times of flare-ups may see children missing parts of lessons.



## We're here to help!

EOS can support you through the process of speaking to your child's school/nursery. If you'd like to talk about what to put in your My Eczema Support Needs document please get in touch.

If when you speak to the school/nursery you don't get the response you were hoping for, or your relationship with the school is difficult we can talk things through with you and see if we can help.

If your child is having a tough time at school because of their eczema we may be able to offer a school workshop to their class, or an education session to teachers. Get in touch if you'd like to know more!

## Useful information

If you'd like to read the latest Government guidelines for supporting children with medical conditions in education you can find them here:



### Scotland

Visit the Scottish Government website [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot) and search for 'supporting children & young people with healthcare needs in schools'



### England

Visit the Government website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for 'supporting pupils at school with medical conditions'



### Wales

Visit the Welsh Government website [www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales) and search for 'supporting learners with healthcare needs'



### Northern Ireland

Visit the Department for Education [www.education-ni.gov.uk](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk) and search for 'supporting pupils with medication needs'





# EOS

**Eczema Outreach Support**

Eczema Outreach Support is a charity that helps families across the UK deal with childhood eczema and its impact on life.

Depending on funding and capacity we offer our members 1-2-1 support, a closed Facebook group, family events, specialist resources, school sessions, as well as children and teen clubs.

## Contact us...

**Email:** [info@eos.org.uk](mailto:info@eos.org.uk)

**Office Tel:** 01506 840 395

**Freephone:** 0800 622 6018

**Visit:** [www.eos.org.uk](http://www.eos.org.uk)