



Eczema: *An Overview*

Prepared for Families of Rady Children's Hospital

Multidisciplinary Atopic Dermatitis Program (MADP) Clinic

Definitions

- ❖ Eczema / Atopic Dermatitis:
 - ❖ A **red**, itchy, scaly / flaky, sometimes *oozing* rash that can affect children and adults
 - ❖ Severe eczema may involve more of the body, and may be *itchier*, disturb *sleep*, or cause other life problems





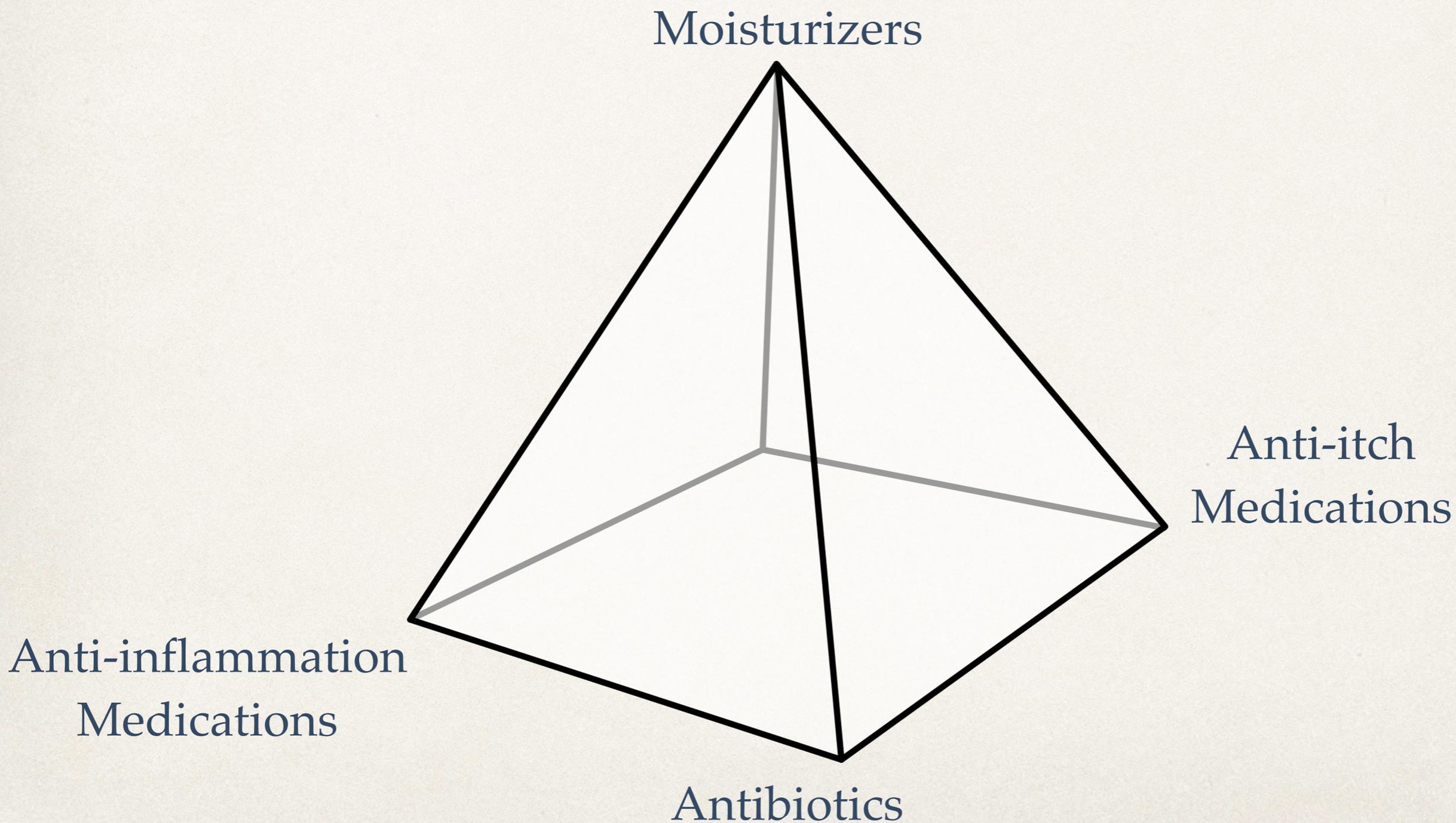
What Causes Eczema?

- ❖ Eczema is complicated and we know that multiple factors are involved including both *genetic* and *environmental* components
- ❖ Skin of eczema patients has a tendency to be drier
 - ❖ Certain *oils* are decreased or absent in the top layer of the skin
- ❖ Factors that worsen symptoms
 - ❖ Dry skin
 - ❖ Stress
 - ❖ Perfumes or scented cosmetic products / soaps

What's with Eczema and Allergies?

- ❖ Patients with eczema are more likely to also have allergic conditions, such as food allergy, hay fever, and asthma
- ❖ The skin changes seen in **eczema** at a young age can in some cases be the earliest sign of the “*atopic march*,” which is the progression from eczema to the later development of food allergy, hay fever, and asthma
- ❖ It is important to take eczema seriously; it's not always just another rash!

Principles of Eczema Treatment



Bathing

- ❖ Most experts recommend bathing daily or every other day
- ❖ Make sure you *moisturize* after bathing!
- ❖ Avoid bathing with harsh soaps
- ❖ Any topical medications should be applied *after* bathing



Moisturizers



- ❖ Moisturizers vary in thickness and effectiveness. The thicker they are, the better they work!
- ❖ Ointments are the **gold standard**.
- ❖ Apply a moisturizer **after bathing** and **at least one other time per day**
- ❖ Avoid fragranced products!



Lotions	Creams	Ointments
<p><i>Thinnest and least effective at moisturizing the skin; absorbs quickly</i></p>	<p><i>In between</i></p>	<p><i>Thickest and most effective at moisturizing the skin; absorbs slowly</i></p>

*The brand names above serve as examples, but many brands make lotions, creams, and ointments

If moisturizers are not controlling the *itch* or **rashes** of eczema, anti-inflammatory medications should be used.



Topical Steroids

- ❖ Topical steroids are *applied to the skin*, not taken as a pill
- ❖ They are the **main treatment** for inflamed (**red**, bumpy, *oozy* or scaling) skin
- ❖ They range in strength from very mild to super-potent



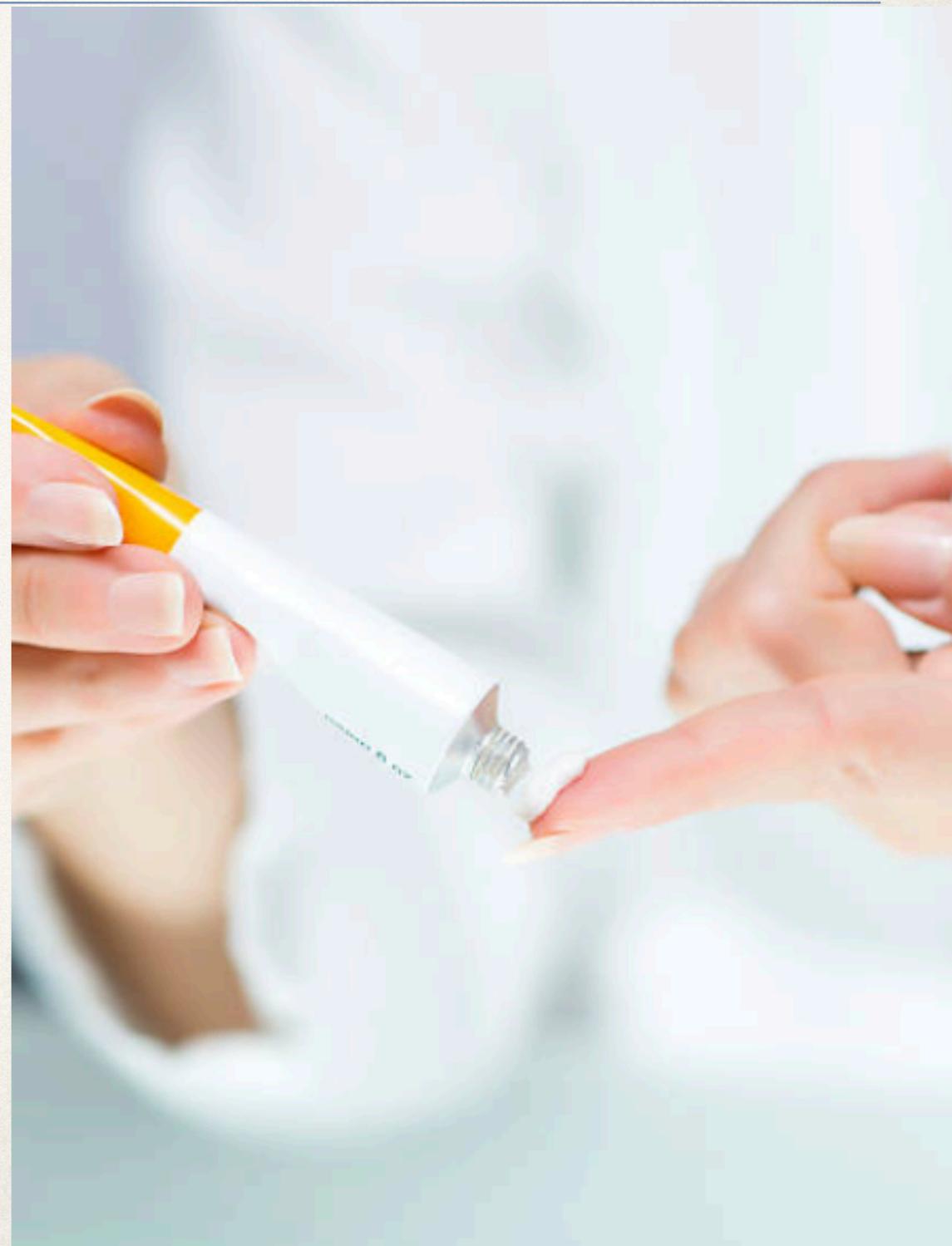
Topical Steroid Safety



- ❖ Skin thinning is **very rare** and usually only occurs with long-term or continuous steroid use to **sensitive** skin areas (face, armpits, and groin)
- ❖ Effects on **growth** are even rarer!
 - ❖ Because topical steroids are applied to the skin, and not taken as a pill, they very rarely have effects on the body as a whole
 - ❖ However, poorly controlled, severe eczema *has* been associated with poor growth!

How to Use Topical Steroids

- ❖ **Use once or twice daily**
- ❖ **Coat the inflamed skin generously**
- ❖ **Your doctor can give you a sense of how much medicine you should use each time**



Other Medications

- ❖ There are some topical medicines for eczema that are **not steroid-based**
- ❖ They can be especially useful for sensitive skin areas (**face, groin, and armpits**) and in maintenance regimens to “**keep away**” eczema, where long-term use is recommended
- ❖ Examples include:
 - ❖ Topical calcineurin inhibitors (tacrolimus, pimecrolimus)
 - ❖ PDE4 inhibitors (crisaborole)



Systemic Therapy

- ❖ Systemic medicines are ones you take as a pill or as in injection, instead of being put onto the skin directly
- ❖ They are reserved for patients with *moderate-to-severe eczema* that is *not improving* significantly with topical medicines
- ❖ They can be incredibly helpful medicines for patients with moderate-to-severe eczema and can allow for **fewer flares** and better disease control
- ❖ The **risks and benefits** of systemic medicines for eczema can be discussed with your health care providers



What About Antihistamines?

- ❖ Antihistamines can be used to help with sleep, but likely do not directly block the cause of itching in eczema
- ❖ Controlling the inflammation with topical medications is the best way to relieve and prevent itch
- ❖ Certain antihistamines can however be helpful for some allergic conditions

What About Antibiotics?

- ❖ Crusting and pus bumps can occur with eczema, due to a bacteria, *Staphylococcus aureus* (aka Staph)
- ❖ Antibiotics can be used to treat staph infection

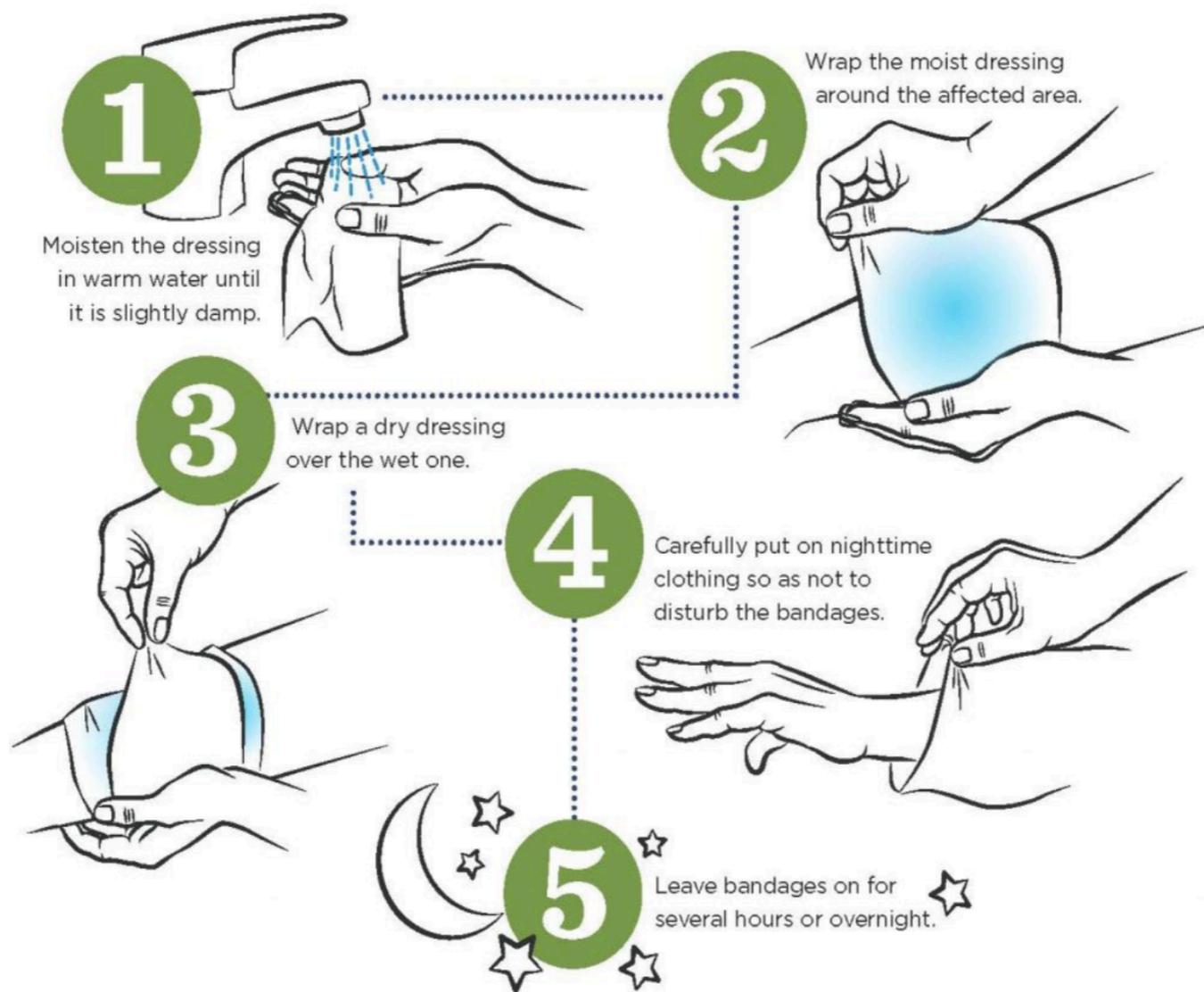


Other Therapies/Habits

- ❖ Bleach baths
- ❖ Wet wraps
- ❖ Use of cotton, non-irritating clothing

How to Perform Wet Wraps

Wet wrap therapy step-by-step



[Click here to Download Full Instructions from the NEA](#)

Summary

- ❖ Excellent skin care with bathing, moisturizing, and appropriate use of anti-inflammatory medications should work to control the eczema!
- ❖ Treatments can be used safely and effectively!
- ❖ We want to work with you to get your eczema under control!
- ❖ For more information:
 - ❖ www.nationaleczema.org
 - ❖ For detailed information on various topics, updated every Wednesday, please visit the NEA Wednesday Webinar series! (<https://nationaleczema.org/resources/webinar-wednesday-archives/>)
 - ❖ Please reach out if you have any questions!

Thank you for reading!

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