

AD DAYS



Whether you live with atopic dermatitis, or care for someone who does, it's important to understand that this condition manifests differently for everyone in terms of symptoms, triggers, and effective care pathways. This guide will help you to have productive conversations with healthcare practitioners to successfully manage your atopic dermatitis.

Before Your Appointment / Between Visits

Find the right healthcare practitioner for you

Consult the healthcare provider's website (if they have one) or consider asking their receptionist if they treat many patients with atopic dermatitis and/or your particular type of the condition. Everybody is different and some partnerships work better than others; if yours isn't working, ask your healthcare provider what your options are.

Consult credible sources

While the internet is a great resource, be sure to carefully consider the source of information. Local, national, and global patient group websites often have unbiased, up-to-date, medically accurate information for those seeking support for atopic dermatitis.

Keep a diary

Note any changes in symptoms, triggers, flare-ups, as well as how atopic dermatitis affects your life in a journal. This information can be helpful in determining whether or when to follow up with your physician, and it can help your healthcare practitioner adjust treatment approaches as needed. For caregivers, it's important to keep note of changes that your family member or friend may not be able to notice in their condition to help them get the best treatment possible. Whether you're tracking for yourself or for someone else, here are some things to note:

New symptoms / skin changes

- Time of day and duration of flare-ups
- What you do when a flare-up happens
- Body areas affected
- Reactions to prescriptions, creams, and other products
- Skin that becomes infected
- New trigger
- Changes to mood and mental wellbeing
- Impact on daily life – e.g., on relationships and social activities

Common symptoms^{1,2}

- Dry, sensitive skin
- Inflamed, itchy skin
- Redness or dark colored patches of skin – lighter skin may appear red; for darker skin, it may be harder to see redness
- Rough, leathery, or scaly patches of skin
- Oozing or crusting

Types of triggers³

- Irritants
- Allergens
- Dry skin
- Stress
- Infections
- Sweat
- Hormones
- Diet changes

AD DAYS around the world

Prepare for your visit

Follow these tips before you go to your appointment to make the most of your time with your physician or other healthcare practitioner.

- 1. Prepare a list of questions and discussion points** to take with you to your appointment, as well as your record of symptoms and experiences since your last appointment.
- 2. Take your medications with you** – take a list of any prescribed medications, creams and/or skin products you’ve been using (even those for other health conditions).
- 3. Bring a notepad and a pen** – at appointments there can be a lot of information to take in and it’s easy to forget some of the details; taking notes helps for future reference. Alternatively, take someone with you and/or ask if you can record the session on your phone.
- 4. Consider your clothes** – you may need to show your healthcare practitioner different areas of affected skin, so wear something that is easy to maneuver.
- 5. Remember your wellbeing** – atopic dermatitis is more than skin deep, and many patients find therapy helpful to manage their mental health and emotional triggers, such as stress and anxiety; take the time to discuss this with your healthcare practitioner.

At Your Appointment Ask the right questions

Don't be afraid to ask questions and request further explanation from your healthcare practitioner if you need it. Here are some questions to consider when speaking with your healthcare professional about how to best manage your atopic dermatitis symptoms:



- + What can I do to keep symptoms from getting worse?
- + Will I need to use my prescription (if you have one) all the time, or just during flare-ups?
- + I'm experiencing side effects from my prescription. How do I manage them, or are there other options I could consider?
- + Since my last appointment, I've experienced some new symptoms. Does this mean my current prescription isn't working? How can I prevent these symptoms from occurring?
- + My atopic dermatitis keeps coming back and my current treatment doesn't seem to be making any difference – what does this mean and are there other treatments I could consider?
- + Sometimes my atopic dermatitis can make me feel anxious and low. Are there support resources or counselling recommendations you can provide?

Ask about **your options**

Understand the range of treatments available to make informed decisions and work with your healthcare practitioner to identify the right care pathway for you.

Arrange a **follow-up appointment**

It's important to see your healthcare provider regularly to maintain wellbeing and manage symptoms. Taking the opportunity to organize your next check-in while you're still at your provider's office can help reduce wait time for your next appointment.

THROUGHOUT THE CARE JOURNEY

Don't give up on finding the right care pathway for you or your loved one. Remember that atopic dermatitis is a chronic, but manageable condition. If you or your loved one is struggling with mental health, don't be afraid to ask for help and/or seek out professional support.

References

1. National Eczema Association. What is atopic dermatitis? <https://nationaleczema.org/eczema/types-of-eczema/atopic-dermatitis/>
2. Maliyar K, Sibbald C, Pope E, Gary Sibbald R. Diagnosis and management of atopic dermatitis: a review. *Adv Skin Wound Care*. 2018; 31: 538-550.
3. AtopicDermatitis.net. What are common triggers for Atopic Dermatitis? <https://atopicdermatitis.net/eczema-triggers>