



HANSON MEDICAL CENTRE & DENTAL SURGERY

Your Health, Our Care

Practice to Patient

Winter Edition

This winter edition of Practice to Patient is focusing on two common issues in winter: flu season and eczema.

Each year over winter and early spring there is a spike in the cases of influenza or 'flu' with some patients requiring hospitalisation but many suffer for days often wrapped up in bed at home. We will look at the flu vaccine, what it's for, who it's for and who can benefit.

Our second topic is a common skin condition called eczema which often flares up during winter due to the increased heating in our homes, schools and work places. We will look at what is eczema, what causes it, and how simple things we can do for ourselves can really help keep it under control for ourselves and our loved ones.



Flu vaccination is quick process with long lasting benefits. All of our GPs or practice nurses can help you with this.

Our Opening Hours:

Monday to Friday

8:00 am – Midnight

Saturday, Sundays & Public
holidays

8:00 am – 11:30 pm

Outside these hours, however, our nurse will extend a helping hand.

Skin Care – Focus on eczema



What is eczema?

Eczema is a chronic skin condition that usually starts in early childhood.

Areas of skin usually in flexing parts such as elbow creases or knee creases or neck can become dry, itchy, red and may sometimes weep.

Scroll down to read more about simple measures you can do to help

Stop the Flu this season!

What is the difference between a cold and the flu?

Cold – viral infection which has symptoms like runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, cough, headache and feeling congested

Flu – is a much more severe viral infection which can cause body aches, fevers, headache, severe cough and usually causes pts to be bed ridden for several days. In children this can also be associated with nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. People who have had it often describe it as 'like being run over by a bus'.

What can I do if I get the Flu?

Take plenty of rest, fluids, pain killers for aches and fevers such as paracetamol. Antibiotics will not help and can give side effects such as diarrhoea. If you are not improving, seek medical attention from your GP.

What is the Flu Vax?

It is vaccine which protects you from most of the viruses that can cause the flu. Viruses keep changing so that's why there is a new Flu vaccine each year.

The flu vax is safe for anyone over 6 months of age. The Flu vax is also safe in pregnancy including in the first trimester.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get the flu but certain groups are affected more severely than others such as:

- People aged over 65 years
- Nursing home residents or residents of long-term care facilities.
- Pregnant women
- People with pre-existing chronic illnesses affecting their heart, lungs, kidneys, immunity or diabetes.
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island adults aged over 15 years

People in the at risk groups above are more likely to suffer complications of the flue such as pneumonia.

Can I get sick from the flu vax?

No, the flu vaccine doesn't have any live influenza bugs so you cannot get the flu from the flu vaccine!

I am young and healthy, do I still need it?

The flu vax is recommended for everyone because it is a highly contagious infection which can be very unpleasant to experience for yourself.

Also if you become infected you could pass the virus onto someone who is at risk of becoming very sick if they catch the flu. So if you care for children, older parents or any other at risk person then a flu shot is highly recommended.



Skin Care – Focus on eczema

What is eczema?

Eczema is a chronic skin condition that usually starts in early childhood.

Areas of skin, usually in flexing parts such as elbow creases or knee creases or neck, can become dry, itchy, red and may sometimes weep.

How is eczema caused?

People with eczema have problems repairing damage to the skin barrier. This is due to a mutation in the gene called filaggrin which makes a protein which is important for formation of the skin barrier.

Once the skin barrier is broken for whatever reason, people with eczema are slower to repair it than other people. In the meantime, lots of moisture is lost through the broken skin barrier which causes the skin to become dry and scaly.

The disruption in the skin barrier can also allow things in the environment to enter the skin and cause allergic reactions which can result in redness and itchiness.

The broken skin barrier also makes it easier for bugs to get into the skin and cause a skin infection on top of the eczema. This can cause blisters, weeping or pus to discharge.

Is it contagious?

No

Why do I have it?

There is no clear reason why some people get it and others don't but people with either personal history or family history of asthma or hay fever are more likely to get it.

What are basic strategies I can do to help?

Things to try

- Heat is the most common eczema trigger so - Lukewarm showers/baths(less than 29oC)
- With heating - Aim less than 20oC in day and less than 15oC at night
- Use soap free products
- Bath oils can help moisturise your skin when bathing
- Pat dry your skin rather than rubbing when using a towel.
- Use layers of clothes, so you can take off one at a time when you get hot

- Avoid having too many blankets or doonas
- In summer, try not to overcool your house as air conditioning can also dry the air and then dry and irritate your skin.
- Wear soft, smooth materials against your skin eg 100% cotton
- Remove clothes labels
- Wear gloves when using any detergents or chemicals - eg when washing up
- Avoid chlorinated pools, if you do decide to swim in a chlorinated pool make sure you moisturise well afterwards.
- When using new skin products, try it first on a small area eg on your forearm and make sure you don't have a reaction before using it on your face and other areas.
- Use sensitive skin washing powders for your laundry
- Keep your nails short so your risk of injuring your skin further when scratching is reduced.
- Swim in the sea in warm weather - saltwater seems to reduce the symptoms of eczema



Avoid things that can irritate or dry the skin such as:

- Soaps
- Synthetic fabrics
- Hot water, frequent showering
- Excess Heat, especially dry heat from ducted central heating and overheating in bed.
- Perfumed bubble baths or 'medicated' bath products
- Scratchy materials such as pure wool, acrylic or polyester

Eczema can flare up some days and be quite settled on other days so try to notice if you have any triggers associated with the flare ups.

What is the basis of the treatment? How can they help?

The treatment aims to help restore the natural skin barrier and reduce irritation and inflammation.

Moisturise, moisturise, moisturise!

Moisturising helps restore the barrier of the skin. There are many brands and formulations, so you may have to try a few before you find one or two that work well with your lifestyle.

Things to consider

Lotions are high in water content so the water in them can dry out quicker, but lotions tend to feel nicer when you put them on.

Ointments are more oily so they give a longer lasting barrier and are more effective but can be not as pleasant to put on.

A balance maybe to use lotions during the day or when going out while using ointments at home or before bed.

When there are flare ups, especially in children using crepe bandages can help reduce scratching and help maintain contact of the moisturisers longer. Often

children can scratch a lot in their sleep and worsen their eczema. You can help sooth this by using a moisturiser before bed and administer it liberally and then wrap crepe bandage around it to keep it in contact overnight(no need for this to be tight, just as long as it is held in place).

Cool compresses can also help with itchiness.

If the eczema is not settling with the basic measures, what can be done?

There are many treatments that your GP can prescribe to help if the basic measures are not keeping your eczema under control. These include:

- Anti-inflammatory ointments and mild steroids to administer to your skin
- Phototherapy
- Consideration of Allergy testing

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