

# Rash decisions: Many triggers for children's skin outbreaks

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A sudden rash can be a puzzling and alarming symptom in a child. But as

one expert explains, rashes are common in kids and often caused by eczema or an allergic reaction.

"Eczema is a disease that causes patches of dry skin, which is often accompanied by intense itching. Scratching can damage the skin, make the rash worse, and increase the risk for an infection," said Dr. JiaDe (Jeff) Yu, an assistant professor of adult and pediatric dermatology at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

The most common form of [eczema](#) in children is [atopic dermatitis](#), which usually starts very early in life.

Eczema goes away with time in many kids, but about half will still have it when they're adults. There's no way to know whether [childhood eczema](#) will continue into adulthood, but [early diagnosis](#) and treatment can prevent it from getting worse, according to Yu.

"About 20% of kids are affected by eczema, and sometimes allergic contact dermatitis can mimic eczema or develop on top of eczema, which makes it even harder to diagnose and treat," he said in an American Academy of Dermatology news release.

Allergic contact dermatitis is a [skin reaction to allergens](#). The most common allergens are metals such as nickel and cobalt, which can be found in costume jewelry, clothing parts such as belt buckles and jean snaps, toys, furniture and school chairs.

Fragrances and preservatives are other common allergens. They can be found in [personal care products](#) such as body washes and shampoos, as well as in laundry detergents.

Some chemicals and dyes in clothing can also cause allergic contact dermatitis. So can adhesives, including those used in wearable blood

glucose monitors, and a chemical used in sports shin guards.

It's important, Yu said, to get the correct diagnosis so your child can receive proper treatment.

"While eczema can be effectively [managed](#), the best way to treat [allergic contact dermatitis](#) is to avoid the allergen once it has been identified," he said.

For example, if fragrances cause an allergic reaction, use products that without them. But don't be fooled: Products marked "unscented" have a fragrance that is masked but can still irritate the skin. Yu suggests avoiding them and looking for fragrance-free products.

Also, be cautious about products labeled as "clean" or "natural." The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has no specific guidelines for labeling a product as such.

"These are just buzzwords that companies put on products to tell consumers that some of the ingredients are potentially derived from [natural sources](#)," Yu said. "As I tell my patients, although [poison ivy](#) is natural, you wouldn't want to use a product containing it."

**More information:** For more on skin rashes, see the [U.S. National Institutes of Health](#).

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