

Childhood eczema cannot be prevented by daily moisturiser use, study finds

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Eczema is a very common skin problem affecting around one in five children in the UK. Eczema usually starts in infancy, and a generally dry skin is often one of the first symptoms in babies who go on to develop the condition.

It is thought that a faulty skin barrier could be the first step in the development of eczema. Moisturisers improve skin barrier function by providing a covering to the outermost layer of skin and trapping in water.

Some healthcare workers recommend that parents regularly use moisturisers to prevent eczema in newborn babies. The aim of the BEEP study was to determine whether such advice had any impact on preventing the development of eczema.

The team looked at 1394 newborn babies who were born to families with eczema, asthma or hayfever. The [babies](#) were randomly split into two groups. One group was advised to apply moisturiser all over their baby every day until their first birthday. The other group was asked not to use moisturiser. Both groups were given general

skin care guidance.

The study found no evidence that the daily use of [moisturiser](#) during the first year of life could prevent eczema in the studied children. There was however, a small increase in the risk of [skin](#) infections. The results also showed early indications that daily use of these creams may increase the risk of food allergy.

Professor Hywel Williams, a dermatologist at the University of Nottingham who led the study, said "Much progress has been made in recent years on the treatment of severe eczema, but the goal of preventing eczema from developing in the first place remains elusive. Other small studies suggested that moisturisers from birth might prevent eczema, and we were surprised when our large study showed no effect at all.

"Whilst this is disappointing for sufferers who thought that was an option for their children, we can now recommend that this advice is not given to parents and begin looking at what other possible preventative options there may be. It is important not to confuse our study on moisturisers for eczema prevention with the use of moisturisers for people who have [eczema](#), where the evidence of benefit is much greater".

Provided by University of Nottingham

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