

The 15 Best Creams for Eczema, According to Dermatologists

By Danielle Fontana, Digital Editor | November 08, 2019



For many, eczema is a daily struggle; for others, an area of confusion. Germantown, TN dermatologist Purvisha Patel, MD breaks it down: "Eczema is a condition that occurs when there is a lack of barrier between the skin and the environment, resulting in increased exposure of the largest organ to the outside and more exposure of the outside to our bodies," she says.

What comes next is where the irritation happens: "The small cracks in the skin causes the nerves in the surface to fire and the vessels on the surface to release inflammatory chemicals, resulting in itching and redness," she adds. The secret to relief: sealing these cracks and building the barrier back up.

Experts agree that the most effective eczema treatment are topical corticosteroid ointments, because "the cortisone reduces inflammation and itch while the ointment base moisturizes and protects," explains East Greenwich, RI dermatologist Caroline Chang, MD.

However, it's not just any formula that'll do the trick. "I never recommend lotions for eczema, says Bannockburn, IL dermatologist Heather Downes, MD. "Lotions are water-based and evaporate from the skin more quickly, while creams and ointments are more oil based. I always tell patients 'the thicker the better!'"

West Orange, NJ dermatologist Rachael Hartman, MD offers up another helpful tip: "Avoid lotions, which tend to come in pumps, and to choose thicker creams or ointments, which tend to come in jars or squeezable containers, instead."

Here, top dermatologists name their number-one eczema solutions.

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Avène XeraCalm A.D Lipid-Replenishing Line

(\$32-\$48)

Lower Gwynedd, PA dermatologist Margo Weishar, MD names the line's rich Balm (\$48) as her go-to for easily irritated skin, along with the accompanying Cleansing Oil (\$32). "Just don't use it on the face, as it sometimes stings the eyes."

Harrison, NY dermatologist Jennifer S. Kitchin, MD is another fan of the line, particularly the Cream (\$48). "It is rich and moisturizing, and is free of preservatives, dyes and perfumes," she says, recommending that the balm be applied at least twice daily.



La Roche-Posay Lipikar Line (\$20)

East Greenwich, RI dermatologist Paula Moskowitz, MD says her top pick is a tie between La Roche Posay Lipikar Balm AP+ (\$15) and Cetaphil Pro Restoraderm Moisturizer (\$16). "I like using them both everyday when skin is damp to lock in moisture. I also love that they're not too greasy, so you can get dressed right away."

Looking for a lighter option? Greensboro, NC dermatologist Christina Haverstock, MD says she always recommends the Lipikar Lotion (\$20). "It's formulated with thermal spring water, approved by the National Eczema Association and is paraben- and fragrance-free," she says. Perhaps the best part: "It has a thicker, more moisturizing consistency than most lotions, but still has a nongreasy feel and the convenience of a pump for applying."



Photo Credits: La Roche-Posay

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CeraVe Moisturizing Cream (\$15)

New York City dermatologist Marisa Garshick, MD's pick: CeraVe Moisturizing Cream. "It contains ceramides which help support the natural skin barrier helping to retain moisture in the skin." New York dermatologist Hilary Lucachick Reich, MD, Fort Lauderdale, FL dermatologist Dr. Matthew J. Elias and Boston dermatologist Dennis Porto, MD also give the cream their official stamp of approval.



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VaniCream (\$15)

Eczema-prone skin also tends to be very reactive to scents and preservatives, the exact reason Dr. Downes recommends this cream. "It's hypoallergenic for those sensitive to fragrance and preservatives," she says. Another fan of the simple hydrator: Orlando, FL dermatologist Allison Arthur, MD. "It's my top recommendation to use on eczema-prone skin. It's a great moisturizer and free of common contact allergens like fragrance and formaldehyde. It's also very inexpensive."



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Ointment Overload

"While I think ointments moisturize better, many patients don't tolerate the greasiness," says Dr. Downes, who suggests applying ointments—her favorites include Aquaphor, Vaseline petroleum jelly and CeraVe Healing Ointment—at bedtime if that's the case for you.

If the thick ointments are still uncomfortable, Dr. Chang recommends [Aquaphor Ointment Body Spray](#) (\$9). "It applies the ointment in a lighter way, feels less greasy and creates less rebound itch."



Photo Credits: Aquaphor, Vaseline

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[La Roche Posay Cicaplast Baume B5](#) (\$15)

Los Angeles dermatologist Divya Shokeen, MD names this multitasking cream as her personal go-to during the winter months. "It can be easily used on the hands or mixed with other lighter moisturizers for the face," she adds. New York dermatologist Robert Finney, MD seconds the pick, "especially over top of retinoids on the face if a patient is on them and has combination skin," he says.



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AmLactin (\$16)

Both Wilmington, NC dermatologist Kendall Egan, MD and New York dermatologist Mary Ruth Buchness, MD cast a vote for the drugstore staple. "Although thicker creams tend to be better, a lot of patients hate to use them—meaning they won't use them. AmLactin is a great option for those that hate thick creams. I love it, especially on the legs," adds Dr. Egan.



Photo Credits: AmLactin

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Cetaphil PRO Restoraderm Moisturizer (\$16)

San Francisco dermatologist Caren Campbell, MD explains that those with eczema and dry skin have mutations in filaggrin and ceramide proteins in the skin, the very "building blocks that keep moisture in and the outside environment out." Her pick to repair these proteins in the skin: Cetaphil Restoraderm, which contains filaggrin technology. "I tend to recommend the Cetaphil pump for patients who prefer lotion and CeraVe cream for people willing to use a cream. Both of these are best applied post shower or bath while skin is still moist."



Photo Credits: Cetaphil