

As we discussed in week 6, eczema can be triggered by lots of things in the environment. Your house and garden are areas that you can adapt to try and reduce your child's exposure to eczema triggers.

## Inside the home

### Household cleaning and reducing house dust mites



Household cleaners, in detergents and sprays with air-borne particles can cause sensitivity – so use steam cleaning or alternatives (for example bicarbonate of soda/or soda crystals as an alternative to bleach and kitchen/bathroom cleaning products). Damp dusting and daily vacuuming also helps to keep household dust to a minimum (remember to do this when your child is not in the same room). House dust mites are impossible to get rid of altogether but there are a number of measures you can take to keep numbers down; use special mattress and pillow covers, replace old mattresses, keep soft furnishings and pillows to a minimum, replace curtains with blinds, wash soft toys regularly at 60 degrees and the favourite cuddly toy can be placed in the freezer (in a plastic bag) during the day ready for a cool, house-dust mite free cuddle at night. Removing carpets is not necessary for mild eczema but if your child has more severe eczema wooden floors or lino may be a consideration, if you are redecorating.



### Bedroom and bedding

Remember to keep the bedroom cool (turn off the radiator in your child's bedroom or set an individual thermostat to 18° C). Keep your home well ventilated in the winter and try and maintain humidity levels between 50%-60%. Use 100% cotton sheets, duvet covers and pillowcases; cotton prevents overheating and absorbs perspiration. Duvets and pillows should be synthetic and washed every week and covered with anti-allergy covers.



### Laundry

There is no evidence that the enzymes in biologic washing products make eczema worse. However, it is really important to make sure all washing products are rinsed out of clothes when washing – which modern machines do well, some even have double rinse cycles. Washing powders, whether biologic or non-biologic should be used in liquid form (as powders do not rinse off well). Fabric conditioners should be avoided as these leave a residue, so if used they should be unperfumed. Clothes should be washed at 60°C to kill house dust mites. If you want to avoid laundry products, use laundry balls as an alternative.



### Pets

If you have a furry pet at home, try and reduce triggers from dog, cat or rabbit fur by keeping furry pets out of a child's bedroom. Use a pet blanket on the favourite armchair, which can be removed, shaken and washed regularly. Avoid your child sitting in that particular chair. Brush pets regularly to remove loose fur. Wash pets bedding regularly and vacuum more often. Be extra careful when visiting family and friends with pets and try to reduce or avoid contact with their pet.

## Outside the home



### Grass and tree pollens

These are air-borne irritants, which are problematic in the spring and summer. They can easily get into the home through open windows, so keep windows closed when pollen count is high or lawns are being mowed. Make sure children sit on cotton blankets in the garden, rather than directly on the grass.



### Moulds

In the autumn moulds release spores into the air. Moulds are found in damp places, piles of leaves and woody areas; so discourage children from playing in these areas in the autumn. Moulds are found in bathrooms and kitchens in damp homes. It is important to avoid mould in homes with good ventilation and treat or reduce areas of damp in the home immediately.



### Winter weather

Colder weather causes the skin to become dry; which is further compounded by central heating and constantly moving into different environments, as the temperature changes. Use layers of clothing in the winter, so they can be removed when moving inside. Use cotton gloves, hats and scarf to prevent wind chill and skin chaffing, due to winter weather.



### Summer weather - sun protection and swimming

Sun can improve eczema or be an irritant but everyone and especially children should be protected from the sun's harmful rays. Finding a suitable sunscreen can take trial and error; mineral-based sunscreens are less irritating to the skin than chemical absorbers. However, titanium dioxide in mineral-based sunscreens can leave a white sheen on the skin and this can be off-putting, particularly for people with darker skins. Sun protective clothing is recommended for babies and small children, with wide brimmed or legionnaire hats.

## week7:



My daughter has eczema and is allergic to grass pollen so summer is a nightmare for her. I rub some oily based emollient on the end of her nose as I've heard the pollen then sticks to the emollient and not as much goes up the nose so she sneezes less. I'm not sure if this is true or not, but it seems to help my daughter. – **Lisa**



I've had eczema since I was two years old and I'm now 56. I think I've had the book thrown at me in terms of treatment - and nothing really works for long. – **Read Lesley's full story and others here.**

## next week: *Living with eczema - your stories*

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Publication date: 13.02.18  
Next Review date: 13.02.21



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