

How Atopic Dermatitis Changes as You Age

If you're born with atopic dermatitis (AD), commonly called eczema, it can be triggered at any age. Here's how this condition can change as you get older.

Babies

0-12 months



- Skin appears red
- Red rashes are likely to appear on face, cheeks, chin, forehead and scalp
- Starts to appear on the elbows and knees between 6 and 12 months
- Can spread to other areas of the body but is not usually found in the diaper area
- May form a yellow crust or small pus bumps on the skin if it gets infected

Children

1-12 years



- May make skin look dry, scaly and thick with deep lines
- Begins to appear in creases of elbows and knees or on wrists, ankles and hands
- May also appear under eyes, around the mouth, on eyelids and on neck
- Can cause redness and itchy patches behind the ears, on feet or on back of scalp (sometimes mistaken for cradle cap)

Teens

13-19 years



- Can cause symptoms again after having been dormant, often triggered by stress or anxiety
- Mainly appears around eyes or on eyelids, neck and scalp
- May be found on nipples, palms and soles of feet
- Can be found in the creases of the elbows and behind the knees

Adults

20-59 years



- Causes rashes that are more scaly than those in children
- Appears in the creases of the elbows or knees or the nape of the neck
- May cover much of the body
- Can cause very dry skin on the affected areas
- May cause itchy rashes
- Can lead to frequent skin infections, which can worsen during pregnancy

Older Adults

60 years and older



- Causes itchy, thick or leathery dry skin
- Results in a decline in skin barrier function
- Creates imbalances of the immune system
- Increases risk of Staphylococcus aureus (staph) infection as a result of open, cracked skin
- Can be worsened by pollen, dust mites, fragrance mixes, and metals (nickel and cobalt)