



Tips for Teachers

Back-to-School can be an overwhelming time for children, as they anticipate what the new school year will bring. Children with eczema may be dealing with additional challenges like teasing, not fitting in, and the general discomfort associated with the condition. Here are a few important facts for teachers to keep in mind about students with eczema:

- **Children with eczema may be self-conscious**

While children's self-esteem is often very fragile, those with eczema may be particularly self-conscious about the appearance of their skin. The child may be teased by classmates and be subject to hurtful comments from their peers. The child may also resist wearing shorts or T-shirts because of embarrassment. Teachers may choose to address this issue delicately with their students by discussing such subjects as diversity, tolerance and bullying in the classroom. Be sure to emphasize that eczema is not contagious and is not caused by poor hygiene.

- **Some activities might make it worse**

Becoming overheated from school activities and sports may aggravate eczema. School activities that involve paste, paint, clay, food preparation, or wood or metal shop may irritate the child's skin. Eczema on the child's fingers may make it difficult for them to hold a pair of scissors or even a crayon or pen, and sore or cracked skin may also prevent the child from participating in some sports. Teachers and parents can work together to develop alternative activities or a fitness program that meets the child's needs.

- **Students may not be able to sit still**

When suffering from eczema, a child may not be able to sit still for very long because of the constant urge to scratch. Although it is hard for children with eczema not to scratch, scratching will aggravate eczema symptoms. This may be a subconscious reaction to the itch, so teachers can help by making the child aware of the scratching and offering quiet reminders not to scratch during class.

- **Children may feel tired and drowsy**

The discomfort and itch of eczema may make it difficult for the child to sleep at night, resulting in irritability, fatigue, and poor concentration at school. This may even affect their ability to complete homework assignments at times. Discuss this issue with the child's parents to try to find a solution that is acceptable to everyone.

For more information and tips on how to help manage childhood eczema, consult the Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE®) Program (www.eczemaCanada.ca) – an established, award-winning program that offers a variety of free educational resources for eczema sufferers, parents and teachers of children with eczema, friends and family members.

Parents, teachers and children can also visit www.pennysworld.ca – a fun, child-friendly website that aims to help children understand eczema. It features interactive learning activities and games, as well as a free colourful storybook, *Penny's EGGS-im-ah*, which can be downloaded from the website.