

Preventing Eczema Flares: Dampening Down the Hot Embers

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Although a cure for eczema is still elusive, a recent breakthrough offers a chance for some patients to efficiently and effectively control eczema flares through the use of new maintenance skin care regimens with topical tacrolimus ointment.

Since its launch in 2000 Protopic (tacrolimus monohydrate) has been used to *treat* moderate to severe eczema in adults and children aged two and over. Now it has also been shown as useful in *preventing* future flares.

Two recent studies involving 524 adults and children from 13 European countries offer hope for patients with moderate to severe eczema who have four or more flares per year and whose eczema settles within six weeks of twice daily use of Protopic.

The two phase III studies show that patients who have Protopic-responsive eczema (those whose eczema comes under control with the use of Protopic) and who continue to apply Protopic twice a week after a flare has settled, have decreased numbers of flares and more time between flares. Over 40 percent of the study patients with moderate to severe eczema who used this approach remained flare-free for at least a year.

The novelty of intermittent use on such an infrequent basis (once-a-day for two days a week) is similar to a recent U.S. study that utilized a regimen of once-a-day for three days a week applications of topical tacrolimus (0.03% ointment) in children, with similar success.

The reason why this skin care regimen works can be explained by thinking of eczema as a fire, with a flare being a full blaze. After dampening down a blaze (an eczema flare), hot embers can remain even if you can't see them (this is subclinical eczema). So even though the skin looks normal, the simmering embers may easily reignite at any time with or without provocation.

Discovered and developed by Astellas Pharma Inc., Protopic has been marketed in 45 countries worldwide, including Japan, the United States, and countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America.