



The Dangers of Steroid Creams Dispelled

Is using steroid creams for the treatment of Eczema dangerous? The simple answer is 'no', according to one of Australia's leading dermatologists.

Up to 10% of children under the age of five will develop Eczema, while one in three Australians will be affected by the condition at some stage in their lives.

Doctor Gayle Fischer says the onset of winter brings with it weather conditions that can dry and irritate the skin, as well as exacerbate the symptoms of eczema.

"The air is drier in winter, whether you're inside with the heater or outside in the elements. As a result, patients suffering eczema can find that their dry skin problem deteriorates," says Dr Fischer.

"Topical cortisone (corticosteroid) creams have long been the choice of treatment by dermatologists to treat the inflammation of eczema and break the itch/scratch cycle. But recently there has been a growing public misconception that any kind of use of steroids is dangerous. As a result patients are too scared to use these useful and time honoured medications.

"Cortisone creams relieve itching fast. They are very effective and safe when used correctly. The important thing is to use the right strength of cortisone for the part of the skin being treated for the right length of time, keeping in mind the severity of the eczema," says Dr Fischer.

Where do these fears come from?

"There are a lot of subtle messages out there about cortisone," says Dr Fischer.

"The first thing to say is that not all 'steroids' are the same as the ones that are abused in sport. The medical cortisones used to treat eczema are completely different.

"Many chemists and even general practitioners unwittingly make patients apprehensive about the use of cortisone creams. Their warnings are well intentioned as they are trying to make sure that patients don't use these products without supervision but such warnings can result in complete discouragement. Naturopaths also tend to be strongly opposed to cortisones."

