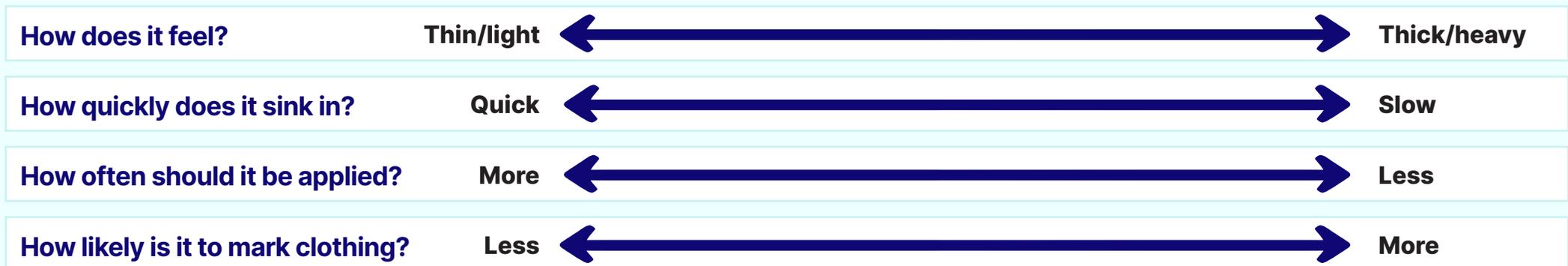
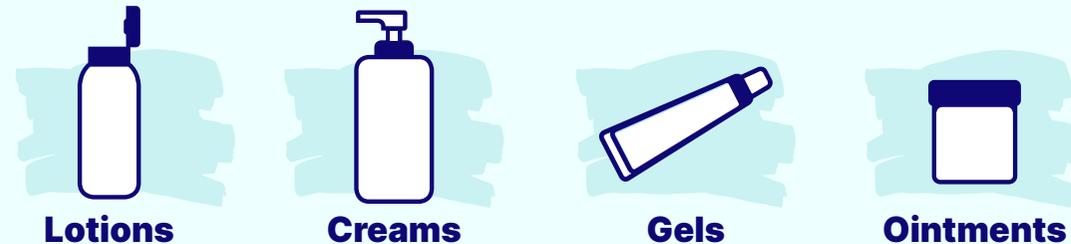


AN EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION AID

## Which type of moisturiser is best for my child's eczema?

The four main types of moisturisers are: **lotions**, **creams**, **gels** and **ointments**. No type is more effective at treating the dry skin of eczema but how they feel, where they are used or how quickly they sink in, can affect **how well we use them**. Thinking about what might be important **to you and your child**, use this aid to help you decide **which type(s) of moisturiser** to try.




Some people like to use a thicker/heavier type at night before they go to bed, and a thinner/lighter type during the day.



You might want to use different types for different weather/temperatures.



Some people like to use a lighter type for their hands and face, and a heavier type for the rest of their body.

**Still unsure? See the next page for more information and advice** but opinions vary most for ointments and creams, and overall satisfaction is highest with lotions and gels. So, if you are unsure, starting with a lotion and/or gel may be best.

## What are moisturisers?

Moisturisers, or emollients as they are medically known, are for people with eczema and other dry skin conditions. They work by adding and trapping moisture in the skin, which helps to keep it supple and less itchy. There are many different moisturisers, but the four main types are:

- Lotions
- Creams
- Gels
- Ointments

They come in different size and shaped containers: larger ones to keep at home and smaller ones for taking out and about.

## How easy is it to put moisturisers on?

Lotions, creams and gels are thin enough to apply from a bottle, pump or tube directly onto the skin. Ointments are thicker and only come in tubs. They must be 'scooped out' using a clean spoon (fingers in pots can introduce germs). Ointments may need softening in the hands before applying to the skin.

## How quickly do moisturisers sink in?

Lotions are absorbed quickly and may need to be applied more often. Creams and gels are absorbed more slowly than lotions. Ointments take longer to absorb into the skin but may not need to be applied as often. How often you use it depends on your child's skin. Standard advice is twice daily but more often may be needed for more severe eczema.

## Where and how should moisturisers be used?

All types of moisturisers can be used on all parts of the body, and not just areas affected by eczema. Lotions may be better for hairy areas. Wash your hands before applying. Smooth (don't rub) them on using downward strokes in the direction of the hair growth.

## Can moisturisers be used instead of soap?

Soap can irritate the skin. Most types of moisturiser can be used instead of soap, in the bath and to wash hands. Ointments need mixing with warm water first.

**Safety tip!** Rinse the bath thoroughly and use a towel to stand on to avoid any slips in the bath/shower or on tiled floors.

## What problems can happen?

All moisturiser types can cause problems. Burning or stinging can occur when the skin is inflamed or if the skin is sensitive to the moisturiser – this is less common with ointments. Unless there is a severe reaction, try and stick with it until the skin gets used to it (e.g. for 2 weeks).

## How likely are moisturisers to mark clothes or bedding?

All types of moisturisers can mark clothes or bedding. This is less likely with lotions and more likely with ointments.

**FIRE RISK WARNING: Moisturisers get into clothing and bedding and makes them burn more easily. They do not completely wash out so keep away from naked flames.**

## What about other treatments?

Moisturisers should be used with other treatments. For all but the mildest eczema this will usually include 'flare control creams' (topical corticosteroids) to treat the inflammation that causes the itch and eczema rash. See [EczemaCareOnline.org.uk](http://EczemaCareOnline.org.uk).

**For more helpful eczema resources  
visit: [www.bristol.ac.uk/eczema](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/eczema)**