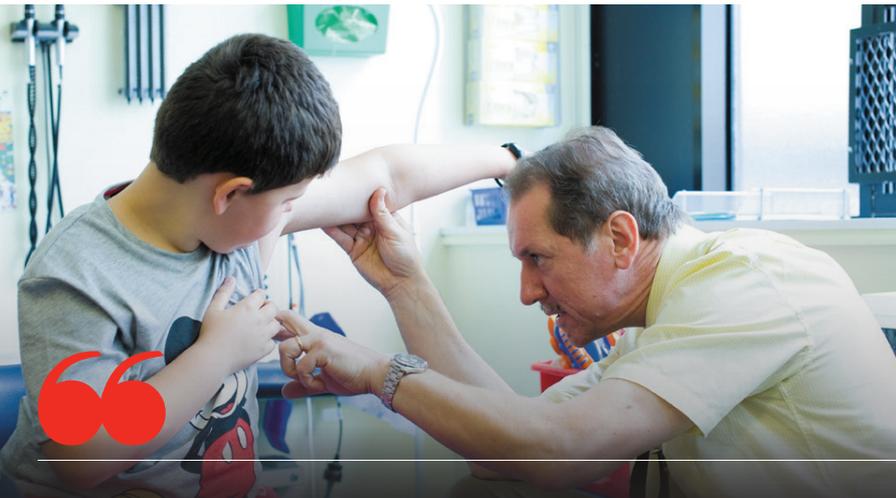




CLAHRC BITE

A bite-sized summary of research from the Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology (CEBD)

January 2012
BITE 09



The use of water softeners does not have benefits over and above usual treatments for children with moderate to severe eczema.



Who?

Children with moderate to severe eczema.

Finding...

Water softeners do not provide additional benefits to children with moderate to severe eczema and should not be recommended as a treatment option.



Further Information

The use of water softeners or moving to a soft water area has been reported by some people as leading to improvements in the skin of children with eczema.

A study which randomised 336 children to one of two groups was conducted. In one of the study groups an ion-exchange water softener was installed in the child's house, and they were given usual eczema care. In the other group children received usual eczema care only. Research nurses, who were not aware of the group allocation, assessed both groups of children's skin for signs of improvement over a 16 week period. Despite parents reporting small health benefits, no difference was found between the two groups in terms of eczema severity. Similar findings were found for night movement (scratching) and the use of topical creams and ointments.

These results suggest that water softeners do not provide any additional benefits over and above routine clinical treatment for children with moderate to severe eczema and should not be recommended. However, it is for the individual and their family to decide whether the wider benefits of installing a water softener at home is sufficient to buy one.

References

Thomas KS et al. (2011) A randomised controlled trial of ion-exchange water softeners for the treatment of Eczema in Children. PLoS Medicine 8 (2) e1000395. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1000395



An explanation of CLAHRC and its role

The Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) is a partnership between the University of Nottingham and the NHS in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire.

Funded by the National Institute for Health Research, our mission is to undertake high quality research to improve health and social care across the East Midlands.

An explanation of CEBD and its role

The Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology (CEBD) conducts independent research into the treatment and prevention of skin disease. They work with patients and members of the public to prioritise and inform their clinically-relevant research programme. They are closely linked with the clinical dermatology department at the Queen's Medical Centre of the Nottingham University Hospital NHS Trust.

CLAHRC website

www.nottingham.ac.uk/clahrc

CEBD website

www.nottingham.ac.uk/dermatology

This is a summary of independent research commissioned and funded by the NIHR Health Technology Assessment Programme (HTA).

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