

# HELPING YOUR PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES UNDERSTAND SYSTEMIC THERAPY FOR MODERATE-TO-SEVERE ATOPIC DERMATITIS

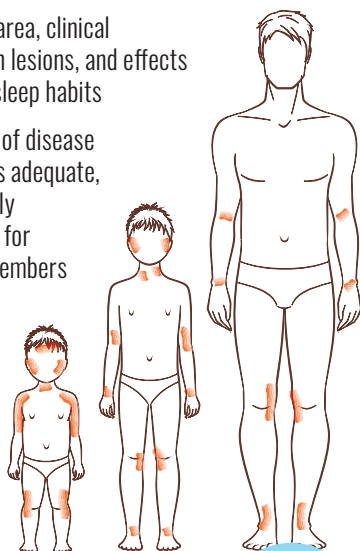
## FOR THE CLINICIAN



- ▶ Your patients with moderate or severe atopic dermatitis (or eczema) and their caregivers may have questions about their disease
- ▶ Moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis is more likely to persist into adulthood and to be associated with comorbidities (eg, asthma)
- ▶ This guide is designed to help you educate your patients and their caregivers and engage with them in a **shared decision-making approach** as you assess the severity of their condition, discuss disease flares, and explain the potential use of systemic therapies

## HELP PATIENTS UNDERSTAND DISEASE SEVERITY AND FLARES

- ▶ Assess body surface area, clinical characteristics of skin lesions, and effects on quality of life and sleep habits
- ▶ Document the course of disease and whether control is adequate, both of which markedly contribute to burdens for patients and family members



## PERSONALIZING the Conversation



- ▶ Consider asking your patient/caregiver 1 question at every visit: "Would you describe your atopic dermatitis or eczema as mild, moderate, or severe?"

## EXPLAIN THAT FLARES MAY BE PREVENTED OR MANAGED

- ▶ A patient may have a disease flare or persistent atopic dermatitis even if they
  - Are using the creams or ointments prescribed
  - Try not to scratch
  - Have good bath hygiene and treat the skin gently
- ▶ In some patients, exposure to an allergen or other trigger, or infections can cause a flare
- ▶ In other patients, the body's immune system overreacts, which may cause a flare even without identifiable triggers

## PERSONALIZING the Conversation



- ▶ Ask patients/caregivers to describe a typical day and their worst disease flare
- ▶ Query patients/caregivers whether they are aware of common flare triggers and discuss ways to avoid them
- ▶ Identify coexisting atopic and other comorbidities in patients and immediate family members, and ensure these conditions are properly managed
- ▶ Educate patients/caregivers that despite good adherence to ointments, moisturizers, standard topical creams, and bath practices, some may continue to experience unresolved symptoms or frequent flares

## ACKNOWLEDGE THAT ATOPIC DERMATITIS CAN BE A PERSONAL AND FAMILY BURDEN FOR ALL PATIENTS

- ▶ Living with atopic dermatitis, especially with more severe disease, significantly impacts the life of the patient and his or her entire family
- ▶ Quality of life, school attendance, and social life can suffer; children and teenagers often miss out on activities
- ▶ Patients can have difficulty sleeping, and some younger children may start to sleep with their parents/caregivers
- ▶ Atopic dermatitis increases the risk that a patient will suffer from depression and anxiety
  - Children and teenagers are at increased risk of autism and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder

## PERSONALIZING the Conversation



- ▶ Question patients/caregivers about the impact of the disease on sleep, quality of life, mental health, school, and family dynamics

## ENCOURAGE ADHERENCE TO BATHING PRACTICES, MOISTURIZERS, AND TOPICAL MEDICATIONS

- ▶ The goal of treatment is to prevent dry skin, decrease itch, and minimize exposure to triggers
- ▶ Bathing practices can include short baths in lukewarm water, every day or every other day
- ▶ Daily use of moisturizers and barrier-repair agents is critical to prevent water loss from the skin
- ▶ Because the skin barrier is compromised in patients with atopic dermatitis, infections may develop on the skin
  - Infected skin may worsen atopic dermatitis and interfere with responses to regular treatment regimens
- ▶ Regular use of topical prescription medications in accordance with the clinician's recommendations is important



### PERSONALIZING the Conversation



- ▶ Explain the differences among various moisturizers and barrier-repair agents
- ▶ Educate patients on the use of topical prescription agents; remind them to use a moisturizer right after bathing
- ▶ Ask patients/caregivers if they have difficulty adhering to moisturizer use or recommended bathing practices

## REVIEW WHEN SYSTEMIC THERAPIES MAY BE WARRANTED

- ▶ Patients who have uncontrolled moderate or severe atopic dermatitis—those who have frequent or persistent flares despite traditional treatments—may benefit from systemic medications
- ▶ Compared with topical medications, systemic medications can treat larger body surface areas
- ▶ Systemic medications are either taken orally or given through an injection into the skin or muscle
- ▶ Systemic immunosuppressants work to suppress the overactive immune system
- ▶ Neither systemic nor biologic therapies can cure atopic dermatitis, but they may help manage symptoms



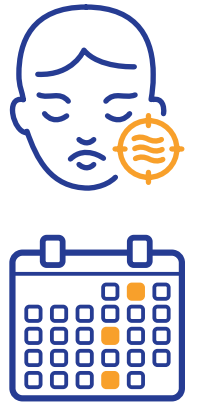
### PERSONALIZING the Conversation



- ▶ Discuss why your patient may be a good candidate for a systemic medication
- ▶ Address common safety concerns and efficacy expectations with systemic therapies in a simple manner that patients and caregivers can easily understand
- ▶ Explain that many systemic immunosuppressants are used off-label for atopic dermatitis, and that there may be side effects. These medicines will require closer monitoring
- ▶ Use of moisturizers and recommended bathing practices should continue while the patient is receiving systemic medication

## WHAT PATIENTS CAN EXPECT FROM BIOLOGIC THERAPY

- ▶ Newly developed biologic therapies can more precisely target specific molecules in the immune system that contribute to inflammation and disease flares in atopic dermatitis
- ▶ Patients/caregivers should still practice good skin care routines and avoid triggers while on biologic therapy
- ▶ Biologic therapies, like all atopic dermatitis medicines, must be taken regularly



### PERSONALIZING the Conversation



- ▶ Discuss why your patient may be a good candidate for biologic therapy
- ▶ Explain to patients/caregivers that biologic therapies are already available to treat a number of other conditions, including asthma and chronic rhinosinusitis
- ▶ Address any safety concerns with patients/caregivers and describe regular monitoring of those on biologic therapies to ensure good efficacy and tolerability

For additional resources and information related to atopic dermatitis, please visit our Clinical Resource Center™

Exchange [CME.com/ATOPICDERM](https://www.cme.com/atopicderm)

