Diagnostic & Therapeutic Guidance for Atopic Dermatitis

Clinical findings that define atopic dermatitis

**MUST BE PRESENT**

- Pruritus
- Acute, Subacute or Chronic Eczema Lesions

**Age-Related Distribution Characteristics:**
- Infant stage starts on scalp or face, spreading to the trunk and extremities; chronic or chronic relapsing lesions lasting more than two months
- Childhood stage includes neck, the flexural surfaces of the arms and legs; chronic or chronically relapsing lesions lasting more than six months
- Adolescents and adults tend to have severe lesions on the upper half of the body, including the face, neck, anterior chest and back; chronic or chronically relapsing lesions lasting more than six months

Step forward when necessary and back one step when control is achieved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 1</th>
<th>STEP 2</th>
<th>STEP 3</th>
<th>STEP 4</th>
<th>STEP 5</th>
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<td>Use emollient b.i.d.</td>
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<td>Intermittent low potency topical corticosteroid for flare control</td>
<td>Mid- to high-potency topical corticosteroid for flare control instead of or in addition to topical calcineurin inhibitor or topical PDE4 inhibitor</td>
<td>Higher potency topical corticosteroid for flare control</td>
<td>Photo Rx or Systemic Rx</td>
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<td>Possible topical calcineurin inhibitor alternative or topical PDE4 inhibitor</td>
<td>Topical calcineurin inhibitor long-term intermittent</td>
<td>Wet wrap therapy</td>
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**Mild Dermatitis** (primarily dryness, mild erythema and scales)
Maintenance prescription after step 1 if disease recurs frequently or persists

**Moderate Dermatitis** (primarily moderate erythema, scales, a few papules & excoriation)
Maintenance prescription at Step 2 if disease recurs frequently or persists; antibiotic at Step 3 when necessary for infection; consider moving to step 5 with photo Rx or systemic Rx if disease is uncontrolled

**Severe Dermatitis** (primarily severe swelling/edema/infiltration or erythema with lichenification, multiple papules, severe scales, crusts, vesicles, erosion, multiple excoriations and pruriginous nodules)
Use maintenance prescription standard; move to step 4 if disease is uncontrolled and step 5 as needed; antibiotic at Step 4 when necessary for infection

Changes in steps are in bold font.
