

**ATTENTION NEWS/HEALTH EDITORS:**

**Ease into Back-To-School: Program Helps Kids with Eczema Learn the ABCs of Managing Their Condition**



**Toronto, August 28, 2008** - Back-to-School can be an overwhelming time for children and parents, as they anticipate what the new school year will bring. For children with eczema - who may be dealing with challenges like teasing, not fitting in, and the general discomfort associated with the condition - learning the ABCs of managing eczema can help them start off the school year on the right foot.

Eczema is a common, chronic, life-altering skin condition that affects an estimated 12 to 25 per cent of Canadian children. The condition causes inflammation deep in the skin and results in symptoms such as dry, itchy skin and a painful red, raw-looking rash.

Eczema sufferers, parents of children with eczema and friends and family members can consult the Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE<sup>®</sup>) Program ([www.eczemacanada.ca](http://www.eczemacanada.ca)) - an established, award-winning program that offers a variety of educational resources and tips on managing childhood eczema at home and at school. The program also provides insight into dealing with the issues that affect young children with eczema, which include coping with low self-esteem, managing sleepless nights and preventing infection.

"As students prepare for Back-to-School, it is especially important for parents and teachers to work together to ensure that children have the most positive academic experience possible," said Dr. Ronald Vender, a Hamilton-based dermatologist and parent of a child with eczema. "Children with eczema may need extra support at home and at school, but luckily, tools are available to help them - and their parents, teachers and peers - understand eczema."

Dr. Vender recommends following the ABCs of managing eczema:

**A** daily skin care routine is essential

A good skin care regimen of moisturizing and medicating the skin is key in alleviating the itch and pain of eczema in children of all ages. Keep the child's skin well moisturized, even when a rash is not present. Moisturizers create a barrier against water loss. While there is no cure for eczema, effective treatments are available to help manage the condition. Consult a doctor to determine the best treatment option for the child.

**B**e patient

Eczema is a chronic condition that must be managed on a day-to-day basis. Find a routine that the child (and parent) can live with, and stick to it.

**C**onversation can help

Parents of children with eczema are encouraged to speak openly about eczema with other parents and the child's teachers. Stress that eczema is not contagious and, if possible, educate classmates and friends about the child's condition. Encourage the child to discuss their condition with others as well.

"As a teacher and a mother of two children with eczema, I know that eczema can have a real impact on many aspects of a child's life," said Amanda Cresswell-Melville, the president of the Eczema Society of Canada and an eczema sufferer herself. "Kids with eczema often feel left out, either because they are

unable to participate in certain activities, or because they are teased about how their skin looks. This is why it is crucial for parents and teachers to get involved and help the child cope with the condition."

Thousands of eczema sufferers, their parents, family members and friends have already turned to the EASE Program to learn about the latest treatment options obtain advice about managing the condition and tips on talking with others about eczema. The EASE Program's wide range of educational material includes:

- Penny's World - a fun, child-friendly website that aims to help children understand eczema. It features interactive learning activities and games, as well as a free colourful storybook, Penny's EGGS-im-ah, which can be downloaded at [www.pennysworld.ca](http://www.pennysworld.ca).
- But it itches so much! - a brochure intended for parents of children with eczema, with tips on managing childhood eczema at home and at school.
- [www.eczemaCanada.ca](http://www.eczemaCanada.ca) - an interactive website that offers patient information and helpful tips on managing eczema, as well as access to EASE Program brochures, a "Tips for Teachers" sheet and other educational material that can be downloaded free of charge.

### **About the Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE®) Program**

The Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE) Program is a national and fully bilingual patient education program developed with the assistance of leading Canadian dermatologists to provide access to useful and accurate information about eczema. Supported through an educational grant from Astellas Pharma Canada, Inc., the EASE Program has been recognized with four Public Education Awards from the Canadian Dermatology Association (2003, 2004, 2005, 2007).

For more information about eczema or the EASE Program, please visit [www.eczemaCanada.ca](http://www.eczemaCanada.ca).

For more information about the Eczema Society of Canada, please visit [www.eczemaHelp.ca](http://www.eczemaHelp.ca).

For more information and to book interviews contact:

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