

# Women's Health

## 9 Best Body Washes For Eczema Tested By Dermatologists

Our doctors recommend formulas from Cerave and Dove.



BRIGITT EARLEY | April 8, 2024

Like any uncomfortable skin condition, eczema—also known as atopic dermatitis—can severely affect day-to-day life. The condition causes dry and, often, intensely itchy skin that can lead to inflamed and discolored skin, rough or scaly patches, and even oozing and crusting. In some cases, the discomfort can be so great that it can even cause sleep disturbances, according to the National Eczema Association.

For those with eczema, proper skincare is paramount to keep skin happy and healthy. Though an overactive immune system and genetics are thought to be the root causes of eczema flare-ups, experts say products with chemical additives and fragrances certainly don't help. Thankfully, there are plenty of products—body washes, eczema shampoos, and beyond—formulated specifically with sensitive skin, including eczema-prone skin in mind.

### Best body wash for eczema

#### What to consider

If you have sensitive skin due to eczema, dermatologists say to keep the following top of mind when shopping:

## Type

“Avoid foaming body washes, because those tend to be drying to the skin and instead look for one that has a cream or oil consistency, says dermatologist Dr. Michael I. Jacobs, an associate professor of dermatology at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City.

### Fragrance-free

Synthetic fragrances and even essential oils can wreak havoc on sensitive skin, so your best bet is a fragrance-free option, says Jacobs.

### Other ingredients

For those with eczema, only the gentlest ingredients are friendly. “I recommend avoiding harsh chemicals like benzene, formaldehyde, and ethylene glycol, as well as drying ingredients like alcohols and retinols,” says Dr. Jacobs. (For a full list of ingredients to avoid, the recommends National Eczema Association as a resource.)

Instead, seek out hydrating products specifically designed to treat sensitive skin and eczema. “Some good ingredients to look for are glycerin, oatmeal, and other ingredients that are moisturizing and will soothe the skin,” says dermatologist **Dr. Jody Alpert Levine**. Others include ceramides, which help repair and maintain your skin’s natural barrier, colloidal oatmeal, which soothes inflammation and itching, and hyaluronic acid, which attracts moisture to the skin, says dermatologist Dr. Annabelle Garcia.

## How we selected

Women’s Health editors, including contributor Brigitt Earley interviewed a half-dozen dermatologists to find out what body washes they recommend to patients with eczema. She also researched the bestselling, most popular, and top-rated options, evaluating thousands of customer reviews and ratings. Read on for our expert-approved list of the best body washes for eczema and sensitive skin in general, all tested by medical experts and vetted by WH editors.

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## BEST OVERALL

### Cerave Soothing Body Wash for Dry Skin

Four different dermatologists praised this body wash as one of the best options for those with eczema—and that must mean something. “This product is accepted by the National Eczema Association and contains moisturizing ingredients like hyaluronic acid and niacinamide to soothe the skin,” says Dr. Jacob. “It is also non-foaming and has a thin, oil-like consistency.”

It’s also free from all of the major players that can cause irritation in eczema-prone: fragrances, parabens, and sulfates. As an added benefit, especially for anyone susceptible to breakouts, this body wash also happens to be non-comedogenic, meaning it won’t clog pores. Bye-bye, bacne.



## PROS

- ⊕ Fragrance-, paraben-, and sulfate-free
- ⊕ Has the National Eczema Association seal
- ⊕ Non-comedogenic

## CONS

- ⊗ Some users complain that it doesn't lather at all

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## BEST BUDGET BODY WASH

### Dove Sensitive Skin Body Wash

If you're mourning the end of your go-around with conventional body washes, you might like Dove's Sensitive Skin formula. The product has a nice creamy consistency that **Dr. Levine** says is suitable for sensitive skin. It contains that coveted glycerin for adequate moisturization, too, promising up to 24 hours of hydrated skin.

On the downside, this product does contain fragrances. The brand says they're hypoallergenic, but this could render the product unsuitable for more severe cases of eczema.



## PROS

- ⊕ Hypoallergenic formula
- ⊕ Promises long-lasting hydration

## CONS

- ⊗ Does contain fragrances (though they're hypoallergenic)

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## BEST SOAP-FREE BODY WASH

### Cetaphil Restoraderm Soothing Wash

This creamy cleanser is unique because it's entirely soap free, says dermatologist Dr. Peter Young, medical director of Nurx Dermatology. This means the ingredient list doesn't contain any chemical surfactants that could cause irritation in eczema-prone people. "It is paraben-free, fragrance-free, hypoallergenic and won't clog pores," he adds.

The ingredient list packs only the good stuff: shea butter, glycerin, sunflower seed oil, and vitamins B3 and E. "It's specifically formulated to provide nourishing moisture to the skin," explains Young. In fact, the brand promises up to 24 hours of skin-soothing relief via hydration.



## PROS

- ⊕ Paraben- and fragrance-free
- ⊕ Hypoallergenic
- ⊕ Delivers long-lasting moisture

## CONS

- ⊗ Some users complain about the smell

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## BEST OAT-BASED BODY WASH

### Aveeno Skin Relief Fragrance-Free Body Wash

You may have heard some buzz around colloidal oatmeal—and that's the superstar ingredient in this formulation by Aveeno. "This fragrance free, sulfate free body wash is made with a soothing Triple Oat formula designed to effectively cleanse while leaving dry, itchy skin feeling moisturized and soothed," explains Young.

"What I love most about this body wash is the experience of using it," says WH beauty director Brian Underwood. "Just because you're dealing with dry skin doesn't mean you don't want a beautiful sensorial experience with a body wash, and this one really delivers—it lathers nicely in your loofah or sponge and doesn't leave skin dry or tight after, obviously." Our editors also love that this body wash is part of an entire line by the brand, which makes shopping for a lotion to use post-shower effortless. Grab the Skin Relief Lotion or the intensive repair cream, and you'll be all set.



## PROS

- ⊕ Soothing, hydrating formula
- ⊕ Fragrance- and sulfate-free

## CONS

- ⊗ It's easy to mistake one of the brand's fragranced options for this one, so keep an eye out

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## BEST CREAMY BODY WASH FOR ECZEMA

### Eucerin Eczema Relief Cream & Body Wash

Love that creamy feel of a traditional body wash? Reach for Eucerin's Eczema Relief formula. It has that thick and smooth feel you're after, but is entirely safe for the most sensitive skin. That's because the non-foaming product is fragrance-free, dye-free, paraben-free, and even soap-free.

Among the good things on the ingredient list? First and foremost: Colloidal oatmeal to soothe and calm itchy skin, says Garcia. It also contains glycerin for added hydration benefits. Just note: The product does contain alcohol, which can be drying, so you may want to steer clear if your flare-ups are particularly aggressive.



## PROS

- ⊕ Smooth, creamy formula
- ⊕ Fragrance-free, dye-free, paraben-free, and soap-free

## CONS

- ⊗ Contains alcohol

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## BEST CLEANSING OIL

### Eau Thermale Avène XeraCalm A.D Lipid-Replenishing Cleansing Oil

Just because you have eczema doesn't mean your body wash has to feel, well, downright boring. Lathering up in this cleansing oil, which has the National Eczema Association seal of approval. It feels a little more luxe than your average drugstore version. But it's perfectly safe for your eczema (read: no angry, itchy skin). The formula was specifically made to seal in moisture, balance the skin's microbiome, and restore the skin barrier all at the same time.

Derms tell WH this is a particularly good pick during winter months. "Shower oils are great for most dry skin that can't tolerate many cleansers at all," Dr. Blair Murphy-Rose, MD, a board-certified dermatologist at Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York previously told us. Why? Because an oil like this one foams just enough to lift dirt and debris from the skin without stripping it of its natural protective oils.



## PROS

- ⊕ Has the National Eczema Association seal of approval
- ⊕ Feels more luxe than other options

## CONS

- ⊗ Some users say the pump breaks easily

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## BEST GENTLE BODY WASH

### Vanicream Gentle Body Wash

"This is my favorite for patients with dry skin who are also very allergy-prone," Dr. Jessica Dowling, MD, a medical and cosmetic dermatologist at the Skin Institute of New York, previously told WH. It's about as gentle as it get, yet still contains all the moisturizing ingredients dermatologists look for—like glycerin, she explains.

Users say the body wash lathers up rather nicely despite the shorter ingredient list. One tester told us that their skin feels "amazing" after showering, noting this cream makes a huge difference for them. Our editors also love that it also has a seal of acceptance from the National Eczema Association.



## PROS

- ⊕ Has the National Eczema Association seal
- ⊕ Lathers well
- ⊕ Exceptionally gentle formula

## CONS

- ⊗ Some users complain about the smell

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## MOST VERSATILE BODY WASH

### Cleure Face and Body Wash for Sensitive Skin

Love a streamlined medicine cabinet? It's hard to beat this liquid formula, which can be used on both the face and body. "I like that it as it has limited ingredients, no harsh irritants, and is pH balanced to help protect the skin barrier and reduce dry, flaky, inflamed or dry skin, allowing it to function properly," says Dr. Martin Smith, a double board-certified allergist and immunologist in Ohio.

Users love that, unlike many other body washes formulated for sensitive skin, this one actually foams well. And a little bit goes a long way, adding to the overall value of the product. Our editors love that the brand has a full line of complimentary products, too—if this one works for you, you can shop everything from toner to body lotion and deodorant with confidence that your eczema-prone skin is in good hands.



## PROS

- ⊕ Full line of complimentary products
- ⊕ Lathers well

## CONS

- ⊗ Some users say it stings their eyes when they use it on the face

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## BEST SPLURGE

### Nécessaire The Body Wash

Get your Sephora fix while knowing your sensitive skin is in good hands with Nécessaire's take on body wash. The vegan formula, made to combat excess dryness, is packed with ingredients to help soothe skin: niacinamide, marula, meadowfoam, and cacay oils, as well as vitamins A, C, and E and omegas 6 and 9.

"I'm prone to patches of dryness and flaky skin on the backs of my calves and upper thighs, and this gentle eucalyptus-scented wash always soothes and makes my itchiness feel much better," says Underwood. "It's a bit pricey, but it lathers well, has a subtle but wonderful scent, and is completely non-irritating."



## PROS

- ⊕ Great scent
- ⊕ Lathers well

## CONS

- ⊗ Expensive, given the ingredients used

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## Is it better to use lotion or body wash to help eczema?

You can use both body wash and lotion to help eczema symptoms. "After using a gentle cleanser, you should apply a gentle moisturizer, preferably within five minutes after showering, to lock in the moisture," says **Dr. Levine**.

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## Should you shower every day if you have eczema?

"If your body wash is gentle enough, you should be able to use it daily without irritation," says Jacobs, who also recommends paying close attention to water temperature. "Make sure your showers and baths are not too hot, as very hot water can be damaging to the skin and exacerbate symptoms."

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## Meet the experts

- Dr. Michael I. Jacobs is a board-certified dermatologist and Associate Professor of Dermatology at Weill Cornell Medical College in NYC.
- **Dr. Jody Alpert Levine** is a board-certified dermatologist at Plastic Surgery & Dermatology of NYC.
- Dr. Annabelle Garcia is a board-certified dermatologist at Sonterra Dermatology in San Antonio.
- Dr. Peter Young is a board-certified dermatologist and the medical director of Nurx Dermatology.
- Dr. Blair Murphy-Rose, MD is a board-certified dermatologist at Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York.
- Dr. Jessica Dowling, MD is a medical and cosmetic dermatologist at the Skin Institute of New York.
- Dr. Martin Smith is a double board-certified allergist and immunologist in Ohio.