

Let's Start the Conversation: Eczema at Work

This resource has been developed by National Eczema Society to help employers to proactively support the mental health of any employee living with eczema.

Whilst there are many important aspects to consider about eczema in the workplace, this resource has been created specifically to support your employee's mental health. Further resources can be found at eczema.org.

The below suggested questions have been developed to help facilitate conversation about your employee's eczema, how they are feeling and how best you can support them.

Starting the conversation

- Conversation to be suggested by line management, employee given time to consider if they would like to hold a workplace discussion about their eczema, the employee reserves the right to deny.
- If in agreement, conversation to be held by line management or another figure of the employee's preference. Provide suitable notice of conversation to allow the employee time to prepare.
- Share questions prior to meeting to allow them to plan answers and receive the best support from the conversation.

Discussion

Triggers can greatly impact mental health. They may cause anxiety, avoidance and affect ability to work. Discuss the below triggers and adjust accordingly.

1. How do you find our workplace temperature? Can we be more accommodating? E.g. move desk away from radiator/window, or request a desk fan.
2. Have you found any triggers that are irritating your eczema? E.g. Hand soap, air fresheners? Could you suggest an eczema friendly soap replacement?
3. Are you comfortable in your work clothes? Is there something you'd prefer to wear.

Discussing eczema. Can you be more accommodating as an employer?

4. Flexible working – Come to an agreement about WFH when having an eczema/a bad mental/physical eczema day.
5. Would you like a slot in your regular 1:1 meeting to discuss how you are feeling about your eczema?
6. Would you like to disclose to your colleagues that you have eczema? Try to normalise that many others live with conditions. If yes, ask what they'd like to share. If no, create a response for your manager to share. E.g. "Person has eczema, they prefer not to talk about it but thank you for asking."
7. For low mental health days, discuss mental health support available from employers.

After the meeting

- Provide your employee with an eczema plan based off the conversation, sign and date, regularly refer back to the document for review every few months.

Remember - Eczema is a physical condition, but it can have a big impact on mental health.