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Itchy Skin? These Are The OTC Anti-Itch Creams That Derms Recommend

Whether you have eczema, poison ivy exposure or minor skin irritation, dermatologists say these skin care products can help.

By Tessa Flores

Aug 12, 2026, 06:00 AM EDT | **Updated** Aug 12, 2026

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TriCalm Anti-Itch Hydrogel, Aquaphor Itch Relief Ointment, Aveeno Eczema Therapy

Be it from sunburn, bug bites or an underlying skin condition like eczema, most of us have experienced the annoying and possibly debilitating pangs of itchy skin. And if you ask board-certified dermatologist Dr. Teresa Song of New York City's Marmur Medical, it's also one of the most common presentations from everything to allergic reactions to just dry skin.

"Over-the-counter anti-itch creams can be incorporated into daily moisturizing routines to help improve baseline itching," Song said, adding that at the point these options no longer control the itch, it's important to seek professional medical advice to address the potential underlying causes.

Song listed a variety of mildly steroidal or steroid-free ingredients and formulations on the market that can achieve improved skin barrier, reduce inflammation and instantly soothe irritation. However, according to her, results of these anti-itch cream are temporary and daily moisturizing aimed at repairing

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and strengthening the skin's barrier is most important.

"Apply [these creams] immediately out of the shower while the skin is still damp to seal in moisture. If the creams are lightweight, consider adding on a heavier moisturizer on top of the anti-itch cream to increase the effects," Song said.

You can find Song's and another trusted skin expert's exact product recommendations in the list below, plus more information about how they can relieve your itchy symptoms.

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The experts consulted for this story do not necessarily endorse the products ahead unless otherwise noted.

1.

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A 1% hydrocortisone ointment

Hydrocortisone is a mild topical steroid that works to decrease inflammation and can be used for most causes of itching skin, said New York City-based dermatologist Dr. Teresa Song. She suggested this itch-relief ointment with a 1% concentration of hydrocortisone by Aquaphor because, according to her, "it is more effective due to the hydrating and occlusive nature of the Aquaphor base."

"Steroids should be avoided for itching caused by superficial skin infections and healing wounds," she cautioned.

TWO OUNCES: $16 AT AMAZON

ONE OUNCE: $12.49 AT TARGET

2.

Amazon

An aloe-infused hydrocortisone cream

Another hydrocortisone-containing option we found is this maximum-strength cream by trusted brand Cortizone 10 that is also supplemented with aloe.

"Aloe is an anti-inflammatory and soothing [ingredient] to help relieve irritated skin and associated itching. It's best for sensitive, post-sunburn or postprocedural skin," Song said.

This fast-working and fragrance-free cream claims to offer relief for up to 10 hours and can control inflammation associated with poison ivy exposure, eczema, psoriasis and more.

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$8 AT AMAZON

$9 AT WALMART

3.

Amazon

A dermatologist-created anti-itch formula

Board-certified dermatologist Dr. Anar Mikailov suggested this dermatologist-developed anti-itch cream that doesn't rely on any kind of steroids to relieve discomfort.

"[This] is a new OTC cream that has aluminum acetate as an active ingredient for itchy skin," Mikailov said. "It's also rich in shea butter [and] ceramides and works well on all types of itch."

In addition to skin barrier-strengthening ceramides, the Dermeleve cream also contains hyaluronic acid to draw moisture into the skin ,and strontium mineral salt, for which there is some clinical evidence to support the claim that it suppresses sensory irritation and histamine-induced itch. Mikailov did say that it's important to avoid the use of antihistamine creams like Benadryl, as they have the potential to cause contact dermatitis.

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4.

Amazon

A soothing rapid relief gel

"For those looking for a gel formula, TriCalm also uses aluminum acetate as an anti-itch ingredient," Mikailov said. This soothing, steroid-free hydrogel is suitable for even sensitive skin types. It claims to offer rapid relief from the itching, burning and stinging associated with a number of itch-causing factors like athlete's foot and bug bites.

$13 AT AMAZON

$14 AT WALMART

5.

Amazon

A cooling analgesic lotion

Both Mikailov and Song suggested Sarna's analgesic daily lotion. It contains pramoxine hydrochloride, an ingredient that Song said works by imparting a local numbing sensation to prevent sensing itch.

"This contains camphor and menthol, which gives a cooling sensation to relieve itch. It's also very moisturizing which is great for dry, irritated skin," Mikailov said. Song suggested the fast-absorbing sensitive formula.

$15 AT AMAZON

6.

Amazon

A rich ceramide-containing itch-relief cream

Another product that features pramoxine hydrochloride as a targeted itch-relieving ingredient is this rich and custard-like cream by CeraVe, a trusted skin care brand that's earned the approval of many dermatologists, including both Mikailov and Song.

Like all of CeraVe's products, this cream contains three essential ceramides, which Song explained "are skin's natural fatty acids and work to build the barrier of the skin. It does not have active anti-itch properties, but works to strengthen the skin barrier so it can be less reactive to common irritants, and is best for eczema patients."

$20 AT AMAZON

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7.

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A colloidal oatmeal balm

"This is a steroid-free alternative that contains colloidal oatmeal for anti-inflammatory effects and ceramides for hydration," Song said of Aveeno's nighttime itch-relief balm. It promises to act as a skin-protective barrier that offers lasting moisture.

A trusted ingredient for those dealing with eczema-related irritation, colloidal oatmeal works to rehydrate and calm irritated skin, Song said.

$20 AT AMAZON

$20 AT WALMART

8.

Amazon

A classic skin-protecting calamine lotion

"Calamine works by causing a cooling sensation as it dries on the skin to soothe the itch sensation," Song explained. This time-tested solution for itching associated with poison oak, sumac and ivy exposure can also work as a skin protectant for skin as it relieves the itch.

"It works for all types of irritated skin, but remember to moisturize after," Song advised.

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