

Atopic Dermatitis: Understanding the Most Common Type of Eczema

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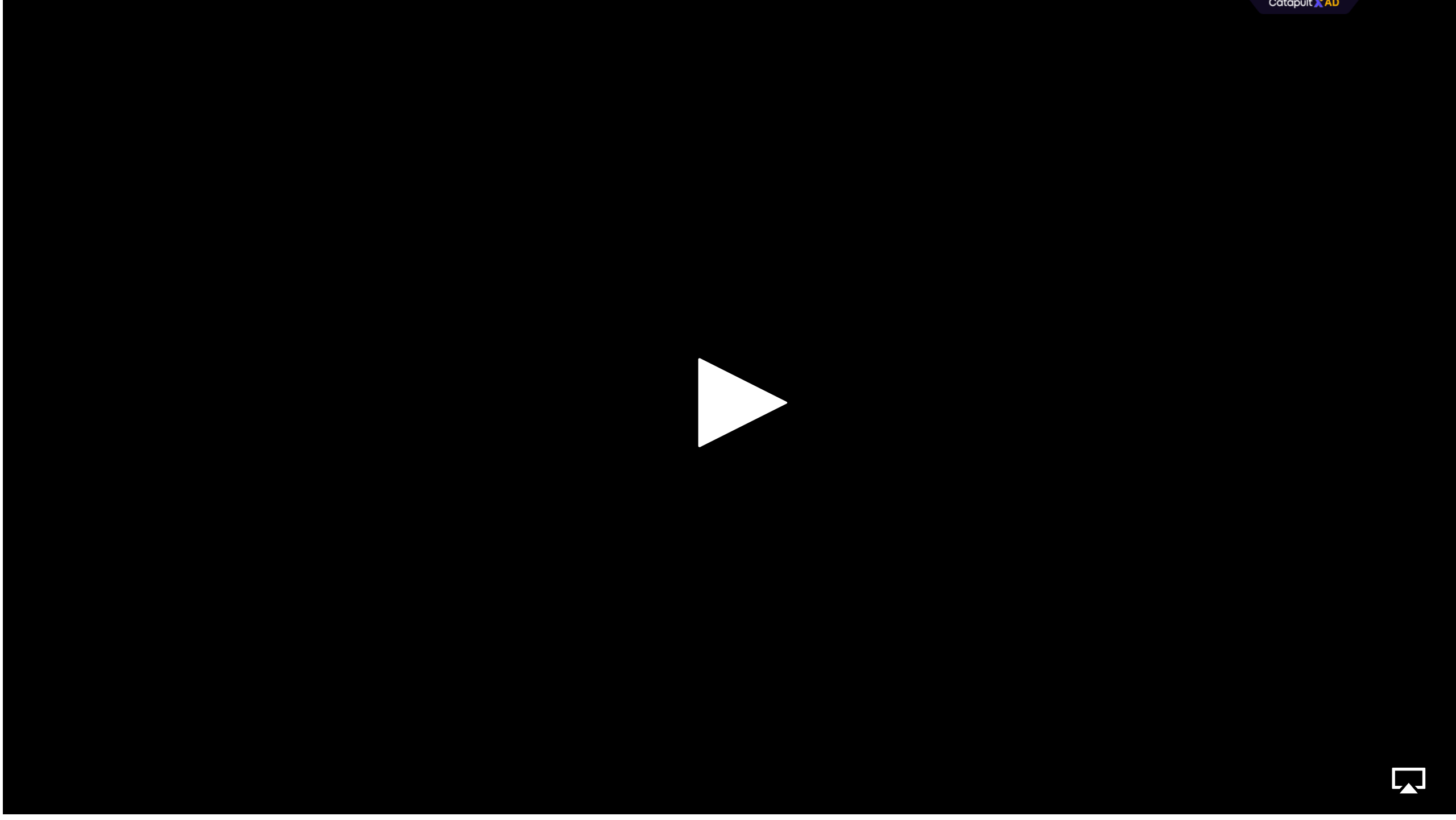
Maybe you have encountered people with atopic dermatitis. Or perhaps noticed someone scratching the red rashes on their face or body and wondered the cause. Or maybe you are one of the 21 million people aged 12 and over in the United States living with atopic dermatitis and know firsthand the ups and downs of managing the chronic itch and irritation that comes with this condition¹.



In recognition of National Eczema Awareness Month (NEAM) this October, it seems fitting to dig deeper into atopic dermatitis (AD) – the most common type of eczema². AD is a chronic condition that can affect a person's daily life, both physically and emotionally³. However, understanding the science behind AD can help people living with it have more productive discussions with their dermatologists and work together to create a management plan for their specific symptoms.

Atopic Dermatitis: An Overview

As a chronic inflammatory skin condition, AD is caused by an over-activation of the immune system³. It can show up anywhere on the skin as relentless, itchy red lesions that may ooze and crust, or appear as dry, scaly patches³. While AD commonly manifests before age five, it can occur at any age^{2,4}.



What's Happening Beneath the Skin?

Research shows that AD does not have just one singular cause. The complexity of the condition means that many things can trigger AD flares, including stress, climate, allergens and other environmental factors⁴.

For people with AD, the immune system can become overactive when out-of-control cytokines (a type of protein) affect other proteins that help maintain healthy skin⁵. The result? Inflammation that leads to dry, itchy skin⁶. In fact, AD can lead to an ongoing cycle of itching and scratching, which can worsen symptoms³.

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Dr. Rebecca Smith, board-certified dermatologist, explains, "There are usually checks and balances with the immune system, but in people with AD, the immune system is overactive and causes them to become even itchier. This leads to more scratching and more damage to the skin barrier."

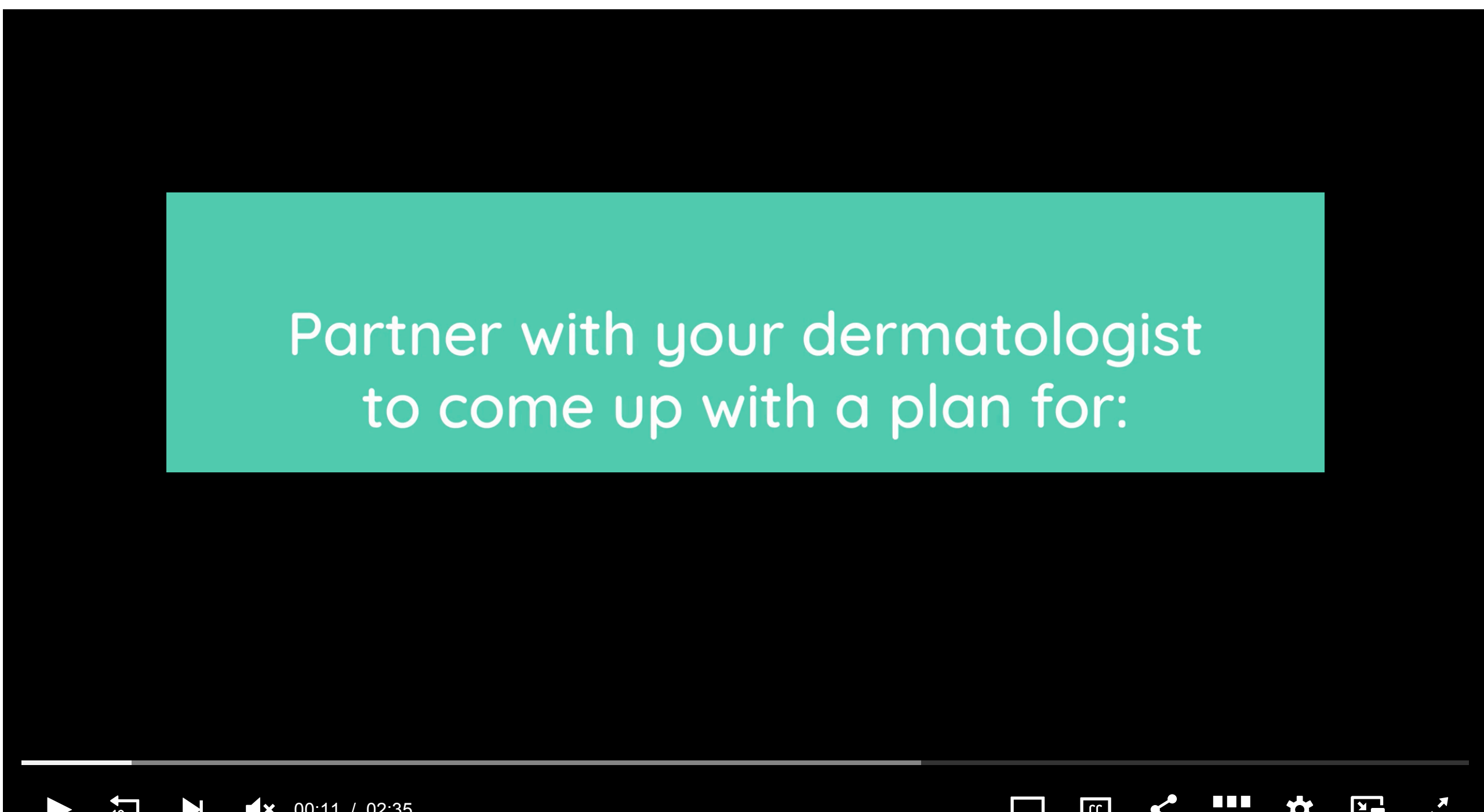
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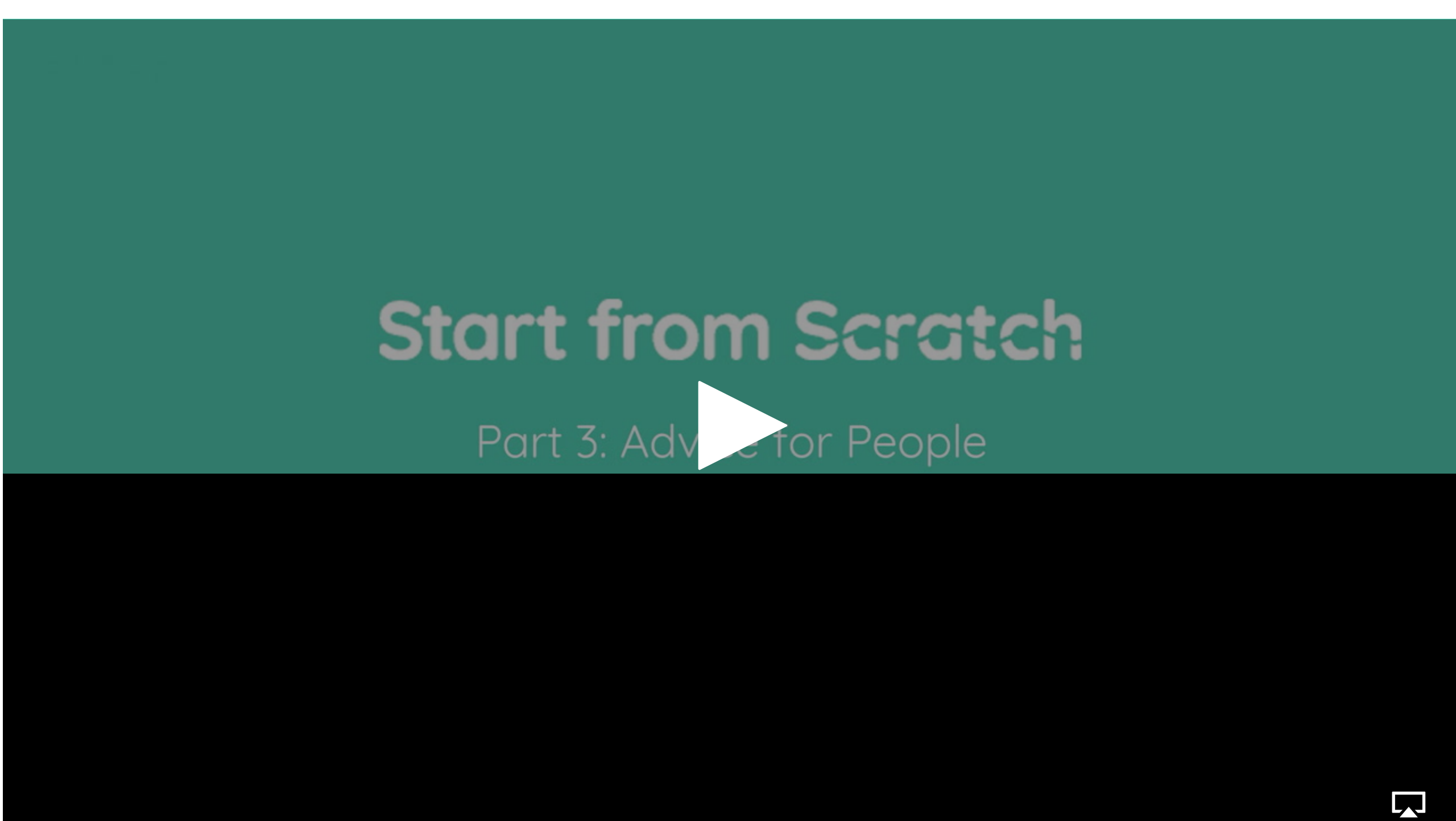
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What's It Like Living with Atopic Dermatitis?

The symptoms of AD – especially itch – can lead to sleep disturbances and/or lack of participation in work or school activities. A recent survey of more than 1,500 people living with eczema and their caretakers⁷ showed:

- Roughly 79% of respondents identify itch as one of the most challenging symptoms⁷ (in the top three).
- Approximately 40% of adult respondents say AD has negatively impacted their social and intimate relationships⁷.



What Are Tips for Those Managing Atopic Dermatitis?

People experience AD differently, so what works for some might not work for others. The complex factors behind AD also increase the need for an individualized management plan, which can prove to be difficult. This is why it is essential to see a board-certified dermatologist regularly and build a trusting relationship with them. By doing so, people with AD can find a management plan that helps address their specific symptoms, triggers and concerns.

While AD is a chronic and unpredictable condition, people can feel confident that management options exist. Dr. Smith shares these tips:

- Understand the root causes of AD so you feel empowered to proactively manage your condition in partnership with your dermatologist.
- Determine what triggers a flare-up or worsens your AD and avoid them. Keeping a journal of symptoms and triggers can help.
- Be your own advocate! If new symptoms arise—or your management plan isn't working—have a conversation with your dermatologist.

Where Can I Learn More?

Schedule an appointment with your dermatologist to discuss a personalized management plan and visit [Start from Scratch](#) for more resources to help you better understand your AD.

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