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Childhood eczema affects around 15% of British children and has doubled in the last twenty years. This skin disorder causes itching and soreness and can cause sleepless nights and distress for the whole family. Currently treatment uses topical steroids and emollients, which have skin thinning side effects. Alternative treatment is frequently requested but the clinical benefit of water softening needs proving and quantifying before it can be prescribed as a solution to this disorder.

The Eczema Society cites two reasons why water softeners can help eczema sufferers:

1. Water softeners eliminate scummy soap curd and result in clean lather, which is kind to skin, reducing dryness and itching.
2. With softened water, the amount of soap used when washing clothes can be greatly reduced. In addition pure soap products can be used in preference non pure soap products.

Two years ago Kinetico assisted in research with the Queen's Medical Centre at the University of Nottingham to establish whether there is a causal relationship between hard water eczema. The results from the trials were positive and it was concluded that a larger, more in depth trial, should take place.

The larger investigation is currently in the process of being approved and this time our industry partners will be helping to instigate the trial. The trials are being used to quantify the benefits of soft water for children with eczema. The results will hopefully provide independent proof that water softeners are beneficial for the treatment of eczema and could result in recommendations/assistance from the NHS for the provision of softeners to eczema patients.

The study is once again being organised by the Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology, University of Nottingham who are providing nursing staff and medical equipment. 310 families will be investigated in three areas in the UK. Half of the families will have softeners installed and half will not. Unaware of which families have softeners, the research nurses will monitor the changes in families every four weeks over a four month period. Overall this study will take approximately three years.