

Understanding
Atopic Dermatitis



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Featuring:

Lisa and her mom

The stars of this book





How was your day at school, honey?

Not so good. I felt like everyone was staring at my red rough patches. And I was distracted because they itched so much that I got three questions wrong on my math test!



Oh, sweetheart. That sounds really hard.

You know what? We're seeing Dr. Greg today. I bet he'll know just the thing to help make your rough patches feel better.

I hope so. I'm done feeling itchy.



Flashback to Dr. Greg's childhood...

I was 12 years old, standing by my locker getting my books for my next class when a friend raised his hand to give me a high five.



Woah! What's up with your wrist, dude?



Hi, Greg! Hi, Jamal. And ummm, Jamal? It's atopic dermatitis. I have it too. And you can't catch it from a high five or from touching someone who has it.

You can't?

Nope.

Nope.

Then what is it?



The present day...

Yeah, what exactly is atopic dermatitis?

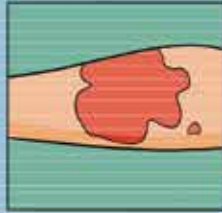
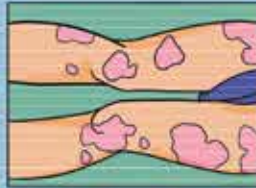
Here, let me explain better.



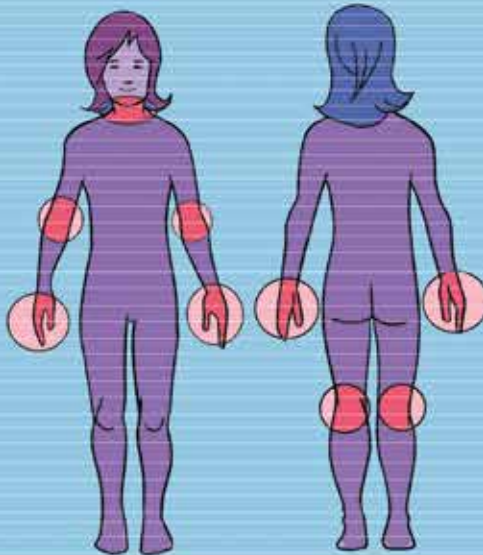
Atopic dermatitis, or eczema (EK-zeh-ma), is a condition that affects the skin. It can make your skin dry, red, itchy, and rough.

It's also more common in people of color, like me, than in people with lighter skin.

ATOPIC DERMATITIS



In older children, atopic dermatitis usually affects the skin on the neck, elbow creases, hands, and the back of the knees.

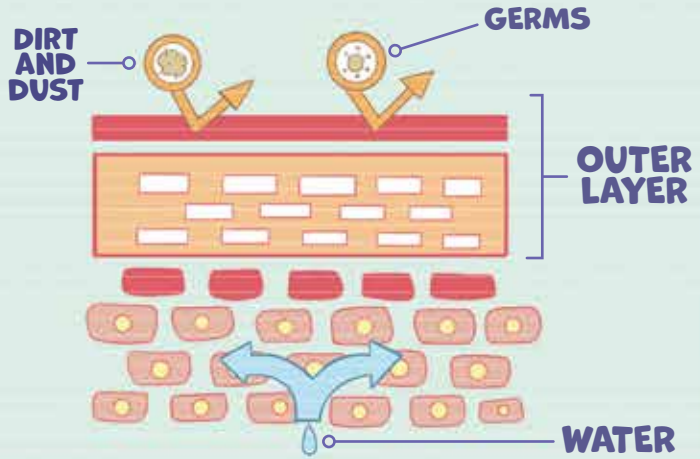




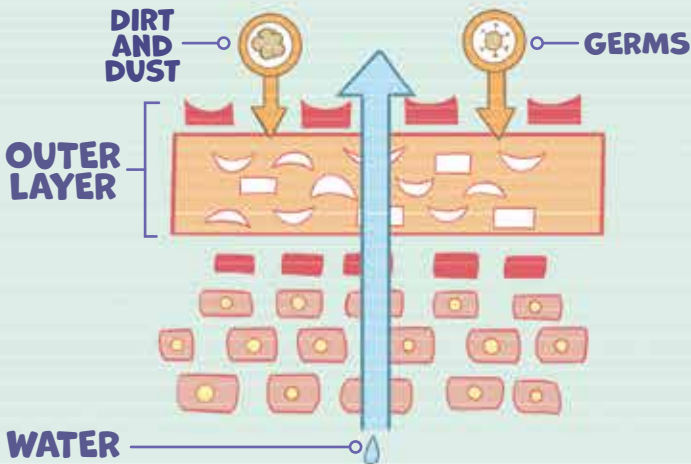
HEALTHY SKIN

Atopic dermatitis happens because the outer layer of the skin doesn't work the way it should.

You see, the outer layer protects the inside layers of our skin. It keeps water in and germs and dirt out.



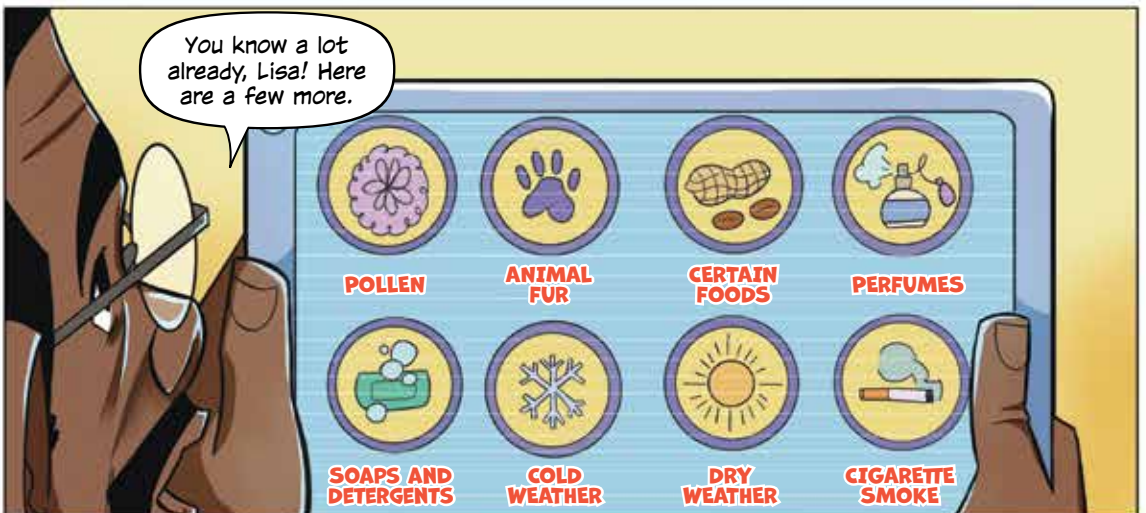
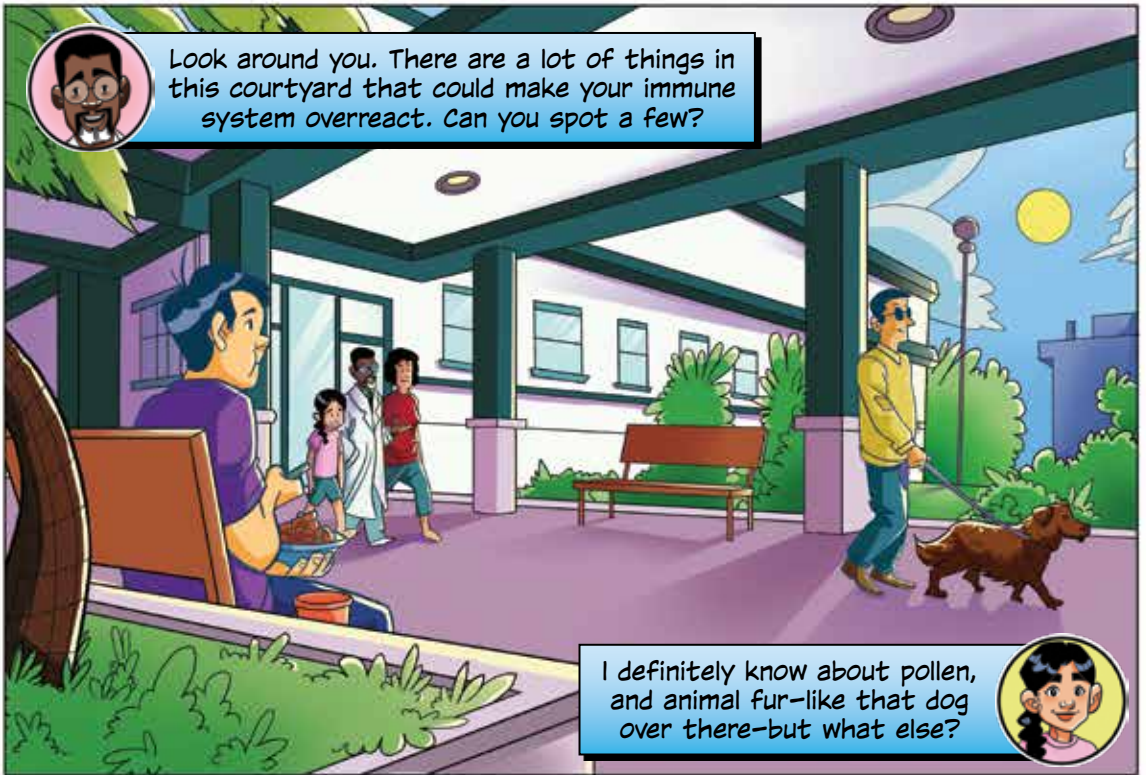
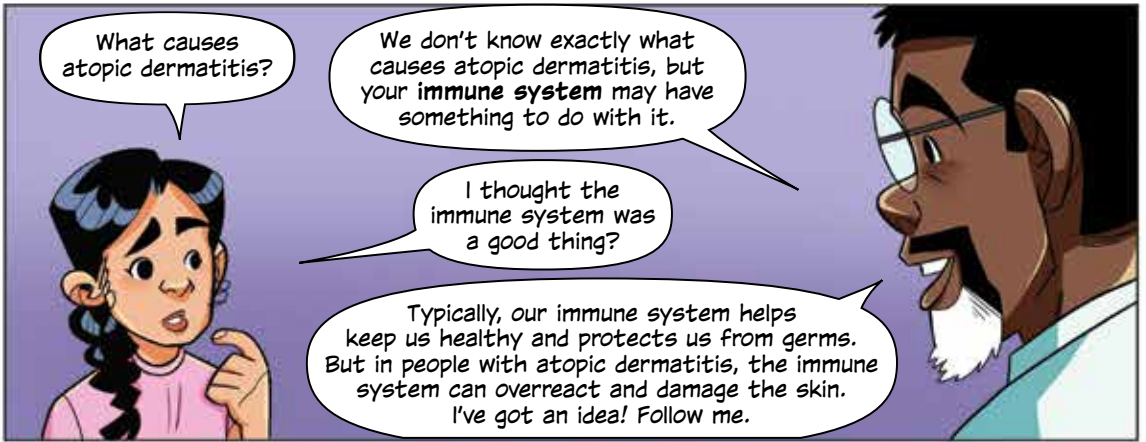
DAMAGED SKIN



When you have atopic dermatitis, the outer layer of the skin becomes damaged.

This lets water out, making your skin dry, and lets dirt and germs in.







Once you know your triggers, there are things you can do to help avoid or manage them.

WAYS TO MANAGE OUTDOOR TRIGGERS:

COLD, DRY AIR.



- Put cream on your skin many times a day.
- Wear layers of clothes made of cotton instead of wool.

HEAT AND HUMIDITY



- Stay in air-conditioning if you can and try not to sweat or get too hot.
- Wear loose-fitting cotton clothing.
- Stay in the shade.
- Use fragrance-free sunscreen.

POLLEN AND MOLD



- Stay inside if you can, with the doors and windows closed.
- Don't go near grass that's just been cut.



WAY TO MANAGE INDOOR TRIGGERS:

HEAT



- Stay in air conditioning in the summer.
- Don't use too many covers at night.

DUST



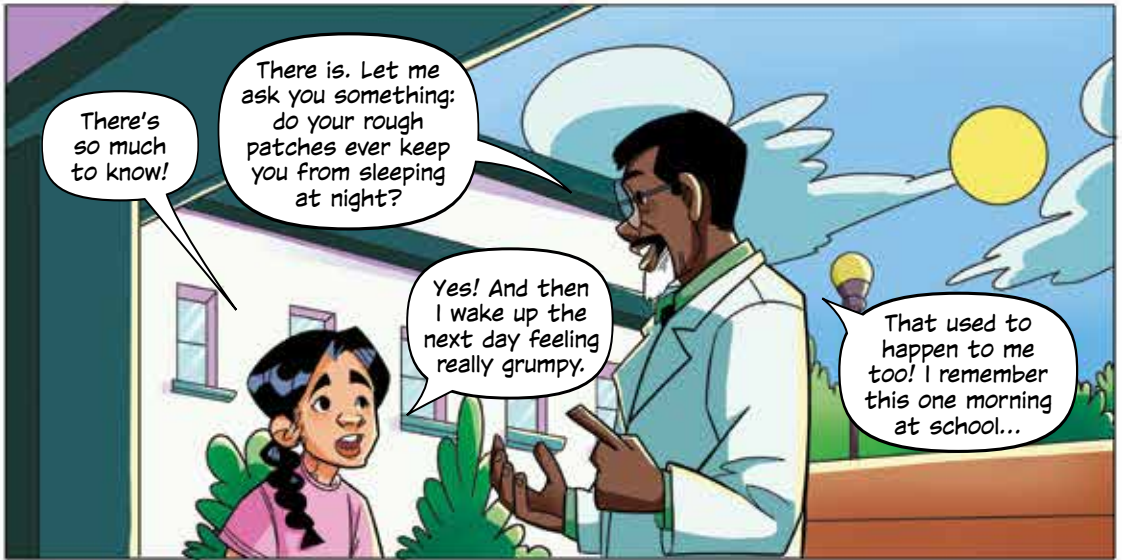
- Dust your room every week.
- Help your parents wash your bedding and stuffed animals.

PETS



- If you have a pet, try to keep it out of your bedroom.
- Help your parents vacuum carpets and furniture.





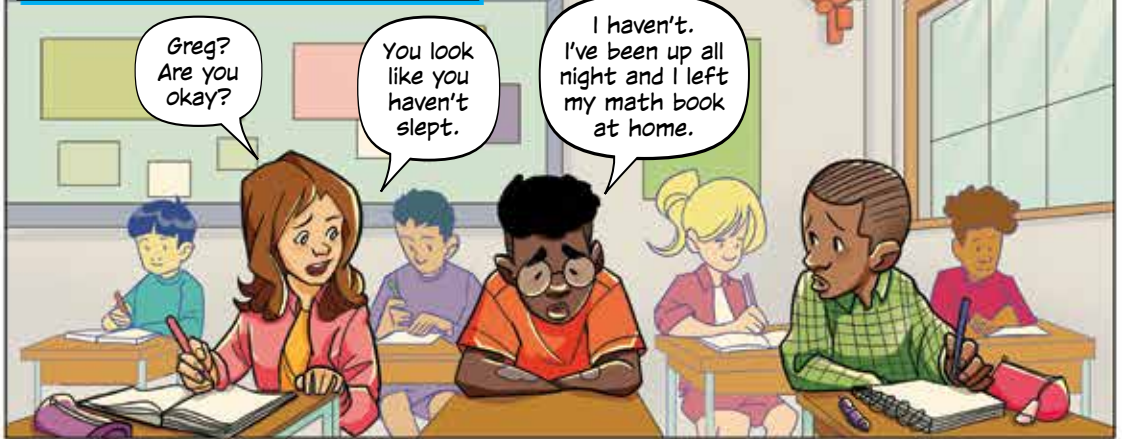
There's so much to know!

There is. Let me ask you something: do your rough patches ever keep you from sleeping at night?

Yes! And then I wake up the next day feeling really grumpy.

That used to happen to me too! I remember this one morning at school...

Flashback to Dr. Greg's childhood...

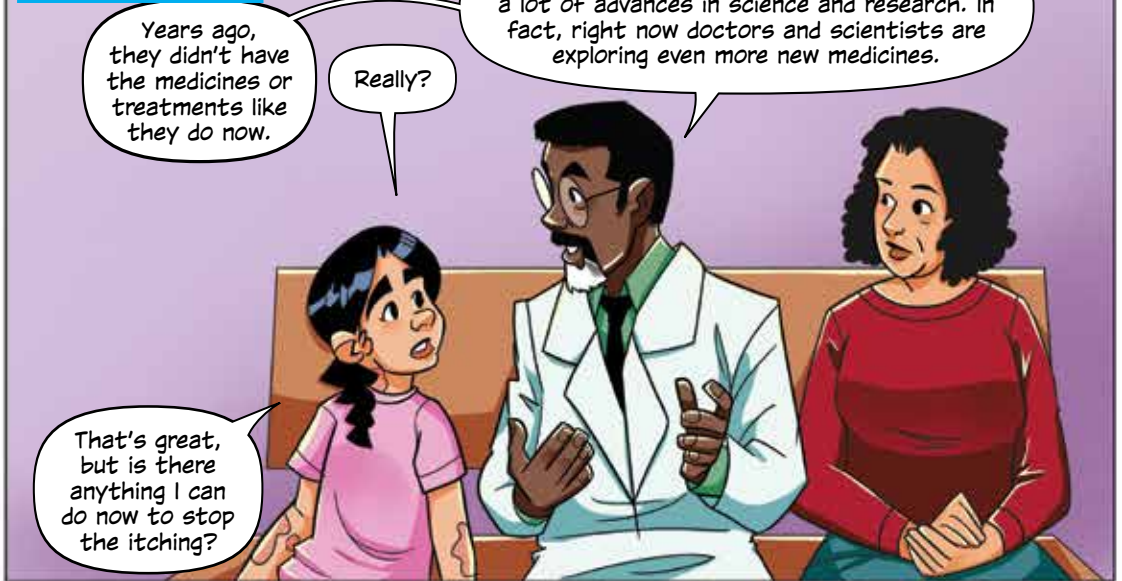


Greg? Are you okay?

You look like you haven't slept.

I haven't. I've been up all night and I left my math book at home.

The present day...



Years ago, they didn't have the medicines or treatments like they do now.

Really?

Really. Since I was a kid, there have been a lot of advances in science and research. In fact, right now doctors and scientists are exploring even more new medicines.

That's great, but is there anything I can do now to stop the itching?



Definitely! There are medicines that can help with the redness, swelling, and itching. Some go right on your skin, while others are given as a shot.

There are other things you can do to help too.

Dr. Greg then explained how putting on a thick cream or ointment every day helped his atopic dermatitis feel less itchy and dry. He also told Lisa what type of material to look for when picking out clothes so they don't irritate her skin as much.



Put thick cream or ointment on your skin every day to help with the dryness and itching.



Use gentle, fragrance-free soaps and creams.

Take a bath or shower every day with warm (not hot) water.

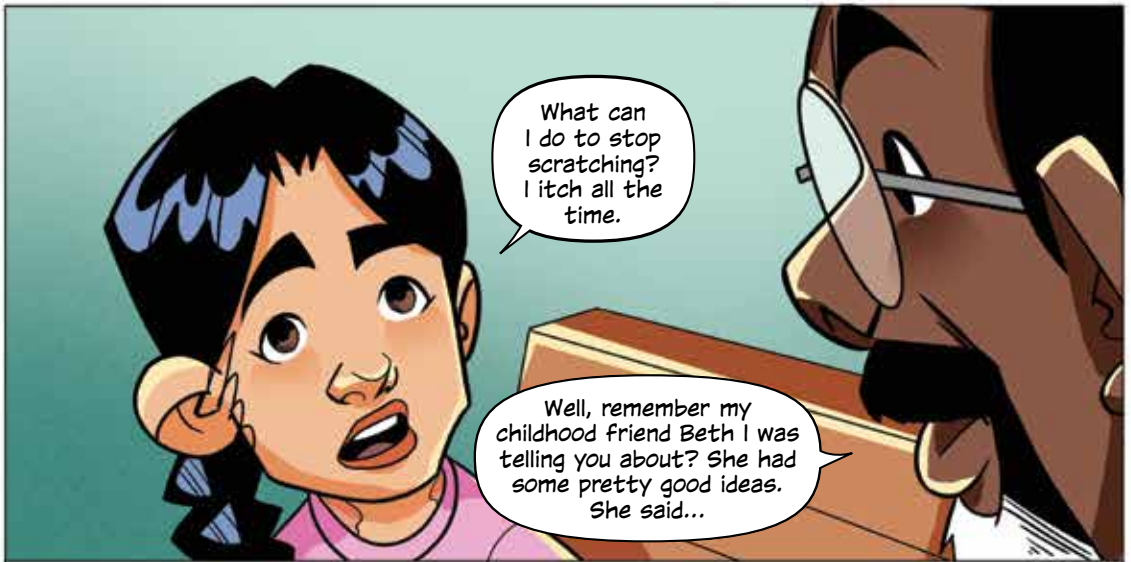


Wear clothes made of soft, light material such as cotton.



One thing that's super important is not to scratch. Scratching can cause even more damage to your skin and make it bleed. Scratches can also let germs in, causing infections.

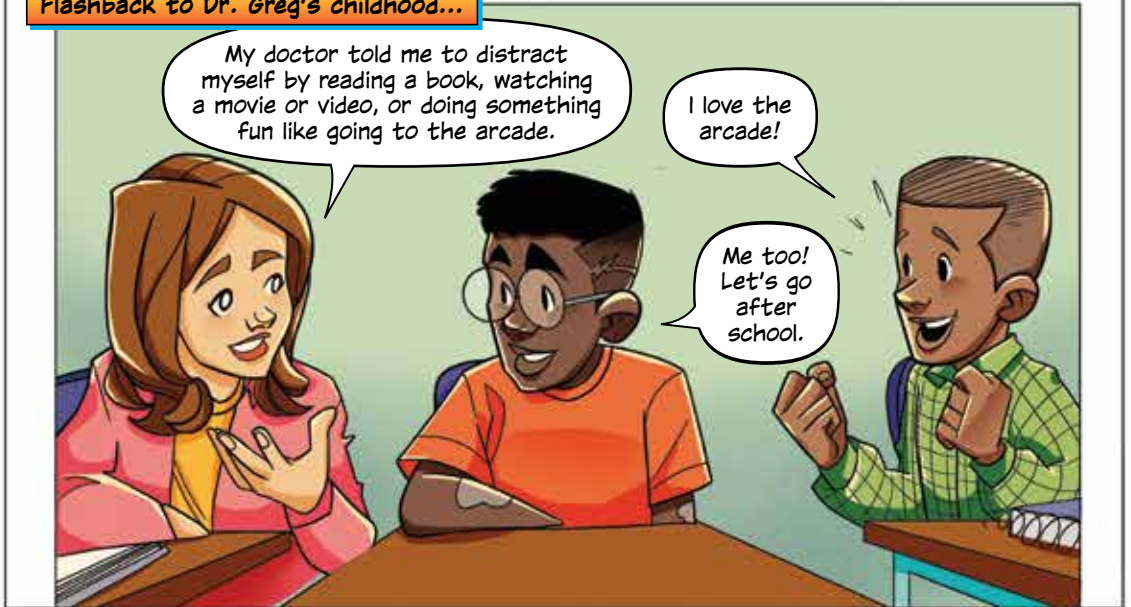
I don't want an infection.



What can I do to stop scratching? I itch all the time.

Well, remember my childhood friend Beth I was telling you about? She had some pretty good ideas. She said...

Flashback to Dr. Greg's childhood...



My doctor told me to distract myself by reading a book, watching a movie or video, or doing something fun like going to the arcade.

I love the arcade!

Me too! Let's go after school.



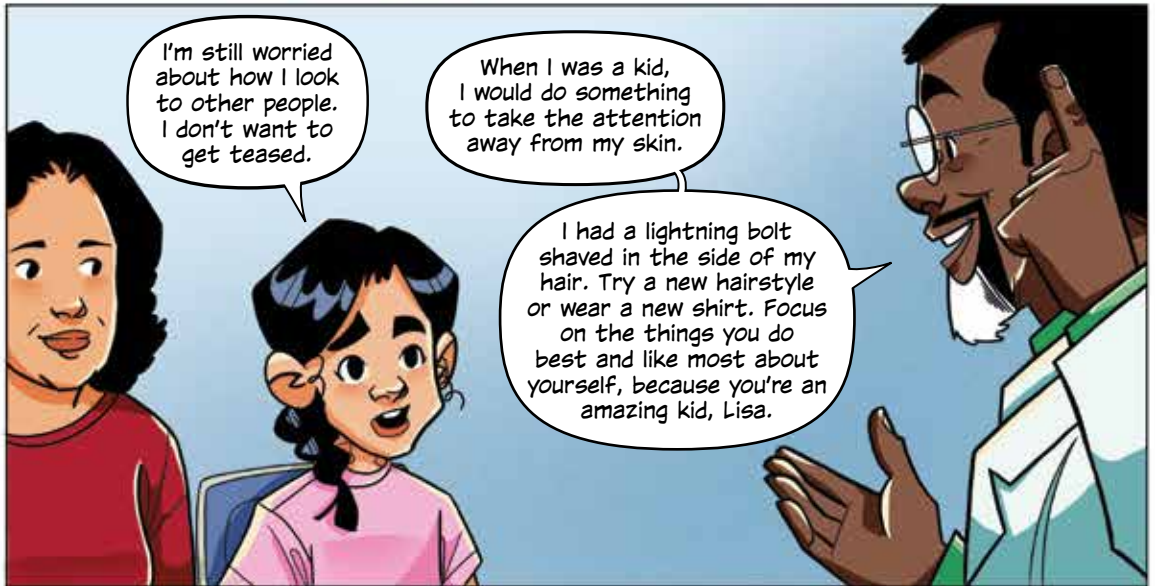
The present day...

You know what happened next?

You went to the arcade?



Yep. And then I became a dermatologist who specializes in atopic dermatitis.



I'm still worried about how I look to other people. I don't want to get teased.

When I was a kid, I would do something to take the attention away from my skin.

I had a lightning bolt shaved in the side of my hair. Try a new hairstyle or wear a new shirt. Focus on the things you do best and like most about yourself, because you're an amazing kid, Lisa.



Thanks, Dr. Greg!
You helped me feel
a lot better about
things.

Me
too!

I'm so
glad.



Do you think we
could curl my hair
this weekend so my
friends notice my
hair, not my rough
patches?

We
definitely
can!



I love
your
hair!

It looks
amazing,
Lisa!

Thanks!
My mom
did it!

From then on Lisa didn't feel embarrassed about her atopic dermatitis. And when anyone asked what her rough patches were, she knew just how to explain, thanks to Dr. Greg.

The end!

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