

Jed Cutaran's Story

Caregiver

"The mental aspect of this disease is so real. Sometimes I'd sit in the parking lot at work, scared to go home and learn how things had gotten worse. So many specialists whose degrees I put my faith in dismissed us or made us feel like guinea pigs. And there are so many questions I wish I'd asked. My hope for the future is that there will be more research into how eczema and its treatments affect different people differently, especially people of color, so we can find better, more personalized solutions for everyone."

- Jed Cutaran, Caregiver

Joseph "Jed" Cutaran is an electrical engineer whose 15+ years in the defense and space industry have taught him a thing or two about solving complex, high-stakes problems. But as a husband and dad raising two sons with eczema, no training could prepare him for the rollercoaster ride he faced in the first few months of his oldest son's life. It started when Jed and his wife Christine noticed their firstborn, Drew, was developing baby acne. Jed was initially willing to accept the pediatrician's reassurances that Drew would grow out of it, but Christine was convinced there was more going on. As the weeks went on, Drew's pain and rashes worsened, causing him to experience terrible allergic reactions, crying and scratching all night in discomfort. Jed and Christine were beside themselves and vowed to do whatever it took to help Drew.

At one point, the family was at Cook Children's Medical Center for a blood draw. After leaving, Drew's lab results were seen by a rheumatologist who noticed something concerning and immediately called Jed at work. She urged Jed and Christine to get Drew to the ER as soon as possible and her "life-changing catch", as Drew calls it, is what ultimately led the Cutarans to a diagnosis of eczema.

But even with an accurate diagnosis, the Cutarans still struggled to find care and treatments that worked for little Drew. At the time, the family was living in North Texas, and they crisscrossed the state looking for pediatric dermatologists who could help, trying food challenges and eliminations, medicines, bedding changes, and more. Jed and Christine came to fear new household products – from soaps and detergents to cleaning sprays – not knowing what would trigger Drew's rashes. Under tremendous stress, the couple argued often and hated doing simple tasks like laundry because it meant facing the bloody sheets and onesies that signaled just how much pain Drew was in. Specialist after specialist put the Cutarans on long wait lists and then didn't look at pictures or listen to their concerns when they were finally seen.

This persisted for the first six months of Drew's life, as he missed one developmental milestone after another. Feeling frustrated and dismissed, the family turned to their general practitioner, who took the time to hear them out and help them find solutions. Through a mix of dietary changes, antibiotics, and topical steroids, they finally got Drew's symptoms under control.

Today, Drew is a happy 7-old who loves playing sports and hanging out with his younger brother. He knows his triggers and how to use his epi-pen, and the boys and their parents have settled into a normal routine with soccer, play dates, and the occasional doctor visits back to Texas from their current home in Virginia. But Jed and Christine worry about the future and have dedicated themselves to advocating for more funding and research so their sons - and others like them - won't have to suffer again.

