BACKGROUND: Atopic eczema is one of the most common skin diseases. In Germany, the economic burden is estimated to be EUR 1.2-3.5 billion yearly. The aim of this study was to show the resource utilization and costs for outpatient care and the out-of-pocket expenses for the patients. PATIENTS AND METHODS: This study was a multi-center, retrospective and prospective cost-of-illness study. Patient characteristics and data on resource utilization were collected with a semi-structured patient questionnaire and by chart abstraction. 193 patients filled in the patient questionnaire; data from 169 patients were obtained by chart abstraction. RESULTS: Average direct medical costs of a disease flare were EUR 123 per patient. Average annual total costs were EUR 1,425 per patient, increasing with severity from EUR 956 (mild) to EUR 2,068 (severe). CONCLUSION: Prolongation of flare-free time and reduction in severity are not only desirable for the patients but also of economic interest.