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## What You Should Know About Eczema

By Heather Colman

Eczema is a form of dermatitis, or inflammation of the upper layers of the skin. The term eczema is broadly applied to a range of persistent or recurring skin rashes characterized by redness, skin edema, itching and dryness, with possible crusting, flaking, blistering, cracking, oozing or bleeding. Areas of temporary skin discoloration sometimes characterize healed lesions, though scarring is rare.

The most common types of eczemas are:

- \* Atopic eczema (aka infantile e., flexural e., atopic dermatitis) is thought to be hereditary, and often runs in families whose members also have hay fever and asthma. Itchy rash is particularly noticeable on face and scalp, inside of elbows, behind knees, and buttocks. Experts are urging doctors to be more vigilant in weeding out cases that are in actuality irritant contact dermatitis. It is very common in developed countries, and rising.
  - \* Contact dermatitis is of two types: allergic (resulting from a delayed reaction to some allergen, such as poison ivy or nickel), and irritant (resulting from direct reaction to, say, a solvent). Some substances act both as allergen and irritant (e.g. wet cement). And some substances cause a problem after sunlight exposure, bringing on phototoxic dermatitis.
- About three fourths of contact eczema are of the irritant type, which is the most common occupational skin disease. Contact eczema is curable provided the offending substance can be avoided, and its traces removed from one's environment.
- \* Xerotic eczema is dry skin that becomes so serious it turns into eczema. It worsens in dry winter weather, and limbs and trunk are most often affected. The itchy, tender skin resembles dry cracked river bed. This disorder is very common among the older population. Ichthyosis is a related disorder.
  - \* Seborrheic dermatitis also known as cradle cap in infants and dandruff causes dry or greasy scaling of the scalp and eyebrows. Scaly pimples and red patches sometimes appear in various adjacent places. In newborns it causes a thick, yellow crusty scalp rash called cradle cap which seems related to lack of biotin, and is often curable.

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Eczema diagnosis is generally based on the appearance of inflamed, itchy skin in eczema sensitive areas such as face, chest and other skin crease areas. However, given the many possible reasons for eczema flare ups, a doctor is likely to ascertain a number of other things before making a judgment.

Dermatitis severely dries out the skin. Keeping the affected area moistened can promote healing and retain natural moisture. This is the most important self-care treatment that one can use in atopic eczema.

The use of anything that may dry out the skin should be discontinued and this includes both normal soaps, dish soaps, detergents and bubble baths that remove the natural oils from the skin.

The moistening agents are called 'emollients'. The rule to use is: match the thicker ointments to the driest, flakiest skin. Light emollients like Aqueous Cream may dry the skin if it is very flaky.

Emollient bath oils should be added to bath water and then suitable agents applied after patting the skin dry. Generally twice daily applications of emollients work best and whilst creams are easy to apply, they are quickly absorbed into the skin and so need frequent re-application.

Ointments, with their lesser water content, stay on the skin for longer and so need fewer applications but they must be applied sparingly if to avoid a sticky mess.

Disclaimer: This information on eczema is presented as information only and should not be interpreted as medical advice. If you or someone you know suffers from eczema, consult a professional for the latest treatment options available.

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### **Methods That Aid In Eczema Relief**

**By Jessica Davis**

Eczema can be a burden. It is a skin condition that can range in severity from dry, red patches on your skin to cracked, weeping sores. Eczema is caused by many factors such as genetics and allergic reactions. No matter the cause of your eczema it is important to find eczema relief. Eczema relief can come in many forms such as home remedies to medications from your doctor.

Let's first take a look at eczema relief through home remedies. Start by examining your bathing rituals. If you suffer from eczema you should avoid taking baths daily with typical soaps and cleansers. These soaps can be irritating to your skin and have harsh effects. It is important to bathe with hypoallergenic

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soap products that are color and fragrant free. It is vital to find cleansers that will moisturize and hydrate your skin.

Provide further home eczema relief by using strong moisturizers such as Eucerin lotion. This will help to seal in moisture which diminishes redness and helps against itching. You can stock up on Eucerin at your local pharmacy or grocery store.

Another area that affects eczema relief is your clothing. Take a look at the materials in the clothing you wear. You can develop contact dermatitis to certain fabrics as well as the detergent these fabrics were washed in. Your eczema may flare up when exposed to wool or even nickel in costume jewelry.

Find a detergent that is dye and fragrance free. These types of detergents will help your eczema relief to a great extent. This is a home remedy that you have great control over when you purchase clothing and detergent.

Another home remedy for eczema relief comes in the form of changing your diet. Many have found eczema relief through a dairy free and/or wheat free diets. Dairy and wheat are common causes of food allergies. These food allergies surface through skin conditions such as eczema. Eczema relief can begin by substituting soy or lactase free milk for cow milk.

If you have tried home remedies and they don't provide eczema relief then see your family doctor or dermatologist. They can determine the intensity of your eczema and prescribe steroids and creams for eczema relief. The important thing to know is that you are not alone and there are many forms of eczema relief at your disposal.

Jessica's blog is online at

<http://www.eczemablog.com>

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