



# Health Fact Sheet

## Eczema

### What is Eczema?

Eczema is an inflammatory, itchy disorder of the skin. Problems include scaling, flaking, thickening, weeping, crusting and colour changes and can bring misery to sufferers. It typically appears on the face, wrists, insides of the elbows and knees and even the hands and feet and is intensely itchy.

### Symptoms

Chronic itching	Skin dry and thickened
Patches of redness and soreness	Scratches
Weeping fluid and scaling	Papules
Small blisters formed within the skin	Crusting
Colour changes	Flaking

### What Causes Eczema?

There are several possible causes. The major ones include:

Digestive disorders:   Insufficient intake of nutrients  
                                  Poor gut flora  
                                  Leaky gut syndrome  
                                  Candida albicans  
                                  Hypochlorhydria (low stomach acid) or poor digestion  
                                  Too many toxins taken in

If the digestive tract is not working properly, either due to the gut lining being damaged and toxins entering the bloodstream as a result, or because elimination is slow or blocked leading to the skin being used as an exit route for toxins, eczema can result.

Environmental triggers:   Pesticide exposure  
                                  Toiletries, cosmetics etc  
                                  Detergents, washing powders, household cleaners  
                                  Metal alloys in jewelry, watches, zippers  
                                  Perfumes  
                                  Rubber or latex    etc, etc

A reaction to external allergens (contact dermatitis) can also be a trigger. These can be metals in jewelry or watches, perfumes, cosmetics, toiletries, detergents, rubber, medicated creams etc. There are many potential triggers in the modern environment. Often environmental triggers and digestive disorders go together – a poorly functioning digestive tract will weaken the body leaving it more sensitive to environmental toxins.

Persistent contact with, or exposure to, the allergen results in the skin becoming increasingly affected and the problem spreading. This type of eczema can also be linked to pesticide exposure.

Food intolerances:	Wheat	Alcohol
	Dairy	Eggs
	Sugar	Red meat
	Peanuts	

Eczema also creates sub-optimum liver function.

Healthy skin needs plenty of vitamin A, antioxidants, essential fatty acids (EFAs) and zinc. Those suffering from eczema appear to have an essential fatty acid imbalance or a lack of zinc (needed in EFA metabolism and the production of stomach acid).

### **What Can I Do About It?**

First and foremost, common environmental allergens and/or food intolerances need to be tested for, identified and eliminated from the diet. These often include dairy, wheat, eggs, sugar, coffee and alcohol. If these are not found to be a problem then attention needs to be turned to the state of the gut, and this supported and healed, along with the liver. This can be done in a number of ways, working alongside each other.

Diet should be low in saturated fats, but contain plenty of the essential fatty acids, particularly from seeds. Meat should be cut right back or preferably taken out altogether, as should dairy and wheat, along with all refined and processed foods and additives. The aim is to have a non-challenging diet to enable the body to begin to detoxify and begin to heal. Later, when things have improved, these can often be re-introduced in moderation.

A liver and colon cleanse is often recommended to start the process, but sometimes it can cause a skin flare-up so it can be kinder just to work gently with diet on an ongoing basis.

If low stomach acid is a problem, sipping diluted vinegar with the main meal of the day can help as can supplementation with Betaine HCl in an enzyme. Plenty of water needs to be drunk each day to aid in cleansing the body and enable it to make full use of any supplemented nutrients.

Essential fatty acids need to be taken in the form of a good Omega 3 oil and supported by a good antioxidant –rich source, zinc, magnesium and B6 and biotin. MSM can help reduce inflammation, provide pain relief, detoxify the body and nourish the skin so is worth adding in and Vitamin A and E oils and creams rubbed in topically can also help. Milk thistle is useful to strengthen and support liver function during this process. Vitamin D is also important – get lots of sun if you can.

Eczema is often treated with strong steroidal creams, especially with children, which has the effect of thinning the skin. Glucosamine hydrochloride helps to thicken the skin, and can offset this effect for anyone using these creams.

### **And finally.....**

Many babies suffer from this condition, often within a few weeks of birth. In breast-fed babies they are likely to be reacting to foods in the mother's diet. The mother therefore needs to pay careful attention to what she eats and drinks, or even better be tested, to find out what the triggers are. In a formula-fed infant it is highly likely that the child is reacting to the milk. Switching to goats milk formula, rice, or even a nut milk can bring an immediate improvement. Again, testing can take away the guesswork.

Strong negative emotions can prove toxic to the body and provoke and aggravate symptoms, as can stress. So bear in mind other elements of what is happening in your life, and if there is a big stress picture see if you can find ways to address this. Digestive imbalance is a by-product of stress and stress is often the trigger for conditions such as this.

### **Regime**

Diet: Follow a cleansing diet

Drink plenty of water

Low in saturated fats

Increase intake of essential fatty acids – seeds, oily fish

Cut out foods likely to cause intolerance, processed foods and additives

Supplement: Essential Fatty Acids (Omega 3) - Start with 2 day and increase if you can tolerate them. If you find them making you feel nauseous this suggests fat metabolism is a problem.

Betaine/digestive enzymes – take with main meals

Zinc – 20 mg daily

Multi vitamin and mineral complex

Milk Thistle – aids the liver

MSM – Sulphur based compound helpful to the liver and skin

Probiotic – essential for a healthy gut

Vitamin D – shown to be helpful. Minimum 5000 iu daily.

Use chemical-free toiletries and personal care products.