

EDITORIAL

IS THERE A CURE FOR ECZEMA?

D. S. Nambudripad, M.D., Ph.D., D.C., L.Ac.

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. Eczema, also known as dermatitis, is a group of skin conditions which can affect all age groups in each and every part of the world. The actual cause of eczema is not known to the researchers yet. The severity of the disease can vary. In mild forms the skin is dry, hot and itchy, whilst in more severe forms the skin can become broken, raw and bleeding. Although it can sometimes look unpleasant, eczema is not contagious. With treatment the inflammation of eczema can be reduced, though the skin will always be sensitive to flare-ups and need extra care. Presently, there is no known cure using Western medical approach. Several alternative therapies profess that eczema responds better to alternative therapy modalities. One can learn to detect the eczema triggers and can learn to avoid them.

PREVALENCE OF ECZEMA

As many as 15 million people in the United States have some form of eczema that is approximately 1 in 18 or 5.51% or 15 millions.

1.1% of population self-reported having dermatitis and eczema in Australia 2001 (ABS 2001 National Health Survey, Australia’s Health 2004, AIHW)

207,000 people self-reported having dermatitis and eczema in Australia 2001 (ABS 2001 National Health Survey, Australia’s Health 2004, AIHW)

112,000 women self-reported having dermatitis and eczema in Australia 2001 (ABS 2001 National Health Survey, Australia’s Health 2004, AIHW)

95,000 men self-reported having dermatitis and eczema in Australia 2001 (ABS 2001 National Health Survey, Australia’s Health 2004, AIHW)

CAUSES OF ECZEMA

The causes of eczema are many and varied, and depend on the particular type of eczema that a person has. Atopic eczema is thought to be a hereditary condition, being genetically linked. It is proposed that people with atopic eczema are sensitive to allergens in the environment which are harmless to others. In atopy there is an excessive reaction by the immune system producing inflamed, irritated and sore skin. Associated atopic conditions include asthma and hay fever. Other types of eczema are caused by irritants such as chemicals and detergents, allergens such as nickel, and yeast growths. In later years eczema can be caused by blood circulatory problems in the legs. The causes of certain types of eczema remain unexplained, though links with environmental factors and stress are being explored.

TYPES OF ECZEMA

There are various types of eczema seen among people from different ages. The most common types are as follows:

- Atopic eczema
- Allergic contact dermatitis
- Irritant contact dermatitis
- Infantile seborrhoeic eczema
- Adult seborrhoeic eczema
- Varicose eczema
- Discoid eczema

There is no cure for eczema using Western Medical approach yet. Some alternative and complementary therapies have worked wonders with certain cases. NAET treatments have been found very effective in relieving the symptoms of eczema and related problems if the protocol is followed diligently.

There are a number of ways to manage eczema, all of which begin with an effective skin care routine. Having access to accurate information is important as this allows the person with eczema, or their carer, to make informed choices when managing the condition. The following are the more commonly used treatments.

Emollients

Topical steroids

Oral steroids

Topical Immune modulators

Other treatments:

Antihistamines to reduce inflammation

Wet wrap bandaging to soothe dry itchy skin, and

Ultra Violet light treatment

Stronger medication may be considered for very severe eczema to reduce itching and pain and to induce sleep.

In 1975, the National Eczema Society was formed by a small group of people, in response to a letter in The Guardian, from a mother of a child with eczema, frustrated by the lack of information and emotional support available to her and others in a similar situation. Today, the National Eczema Society provides information and advice through a telephone helpline, an email advisory service, printed material as well as providing education and awareness training for healthcare professionals. We also fund scientific and medical research projects into the causes and treatments of eczema.

The society is able to support thousands of people including children and teenagers with eczema each year and provide information and advice. So join the group this year to celebrate National Eczema Week (15 -23 September) by being a part of the "Great Pyjama Party event."

As anyone who has ever lived with eczema will know, there is nothing you need more than comfort and a good night's sleep. Though not the answer for everybody, Pyjamas party help to communicate the role that sleep plays in managing eczema – and gives us a fantastic way of spreading the word, raising money and having fun at the same time!

The support group can be reached by email at: pyjama@eczema.org.

References

- Atopic Dermatitis, The Epidemiology, Causes and Prevention of Atopic Eczema, Edited by Hywel C. Williams. University of Nottingham, 2000.
- East Asian Medical Studies society: Fundamentals of Chinese Medicine, Paradigm Publications, 1985.
- Essentials of Chinese Acupuncture, Foreign Language Press, 24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing, China. 1980, 291-292
- Huang-di Nei-Jing Su-wen (Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic of Medicine), Beijing, People's press, 1963. (First appeared in 100B.C.).
- Hyde, Patricia, Reviewer. *All About Eczema*. TeensHealth. Nemours Foundation, 2006.
- Krohn, Jacqueline, and Frances Taylor. *Natural Detoxification*, Second Edition. Port Roberts, WA: Hartley and Marks, 2000.
- Krohn, Jacqueline and Frances Taylor. *Finding the Right Treatment*, Second Edition. Point Roberts, WA: Hartley & Marks, 2002.
- Krohn, Jacqueline, and Frances Taylor. *Phenolics and Other Allergens*. Los Alamos, NM: K and T Books, 2001.
- Motoyama M. *Comparison of Diagnostic Methods in Western and Eastern Medicine*. A Correlation between Ki Energy and Environmental Conditions. Tokyo, Japan: Human Science Press, 2000
- Nambudripad, Devi. *The NAET Guide Book*, Sixth Edition. Buena Park, CA: Delta Publishing Company, 2003a.
- Nambudripad, Devi. *Say Good-bye to Your Allergies*, Delta Publishing Company, Buena Park, CA, 2003.
- Nambudripad, Devi. *Freedom From Eczema*, Buena Park, CA: Delta Publishing Company, Buena Park, CA 2007.
- Rudikoff D and Lebwohl M. "Atopic dermatitis." *Lancet* 351(9117): 1715-21. 1998.
- Larsen F and Hanikin J. "Epidemiology of Atopic Dermatitis." *Immunology and Allergy Clinics of North America* . 22:1-25. 2002.
- Reprints Request to:
- NAR Foundation
6714-32 Beach Blvd.
Buena Park, CA 90621
email: narfoundation@yahoo.com