



Summer is here!

Summer is here! A relief for most eczema sufferers as temperatures get warmer and humidity is restored to a more decent level. How should you prepare for the summer season if you, or your child is affected by eczema?

See page 3 for useful tips

There is HOPE! By Debbie McLean

I have been struggling with eczema for 43 years – through childhood name-calling, stares, sleepless nights and plenty of days when my skin was so painful I didn't know what to do. But I have finally found a way to maintain and care for my skin and have a fairly normal lifestyle.

As a child, I was hospitalized a few times for my eczema and had to wear cardboard around my arms in the evenings to prevent me from scratching. Sometimes my skin would get so bad that my parents would have to soak my feet in the tub in order to get my socks off. As a teenager things improved, and I was able to manage my skin just by using moisturizers.

When I was 25 years old, my eczema flared up again. This time, I believe it was caused by stress. I was planning a wedding and, needless to say, the stress involved caused a really bad flare-up. I didn't want to have red scabs showing on my body

for the wedding pictures and I only had a couple of weeks to get my symptoms back under control before the wedding. In desperation, I went to see my dermatologist and he, in turn, put me on oral steroids, which quickly cleared up my skin.

One of the problems with oral steroids, though, is that you have to wean yourself off them slowly. So after the wedding, as I was weaning myself off the steroids, my body started to swell. One leg swelled to twice the size of the other. But, all in all, it had been worth the trouble to have normal skin for the wedding pictures.

As we all know, day-to-day life involves a certain amount of stress and, in order to try and avoid another flare-up, I thought it would be a good idea to try different ways of keeping my eczema under control. I began to experiment and try different treatments, as well as different foods. I found that an excessive amount of milk or chocolate were definitely triggers for me, so I have learned to cut back on them.

As for treatments, I had been using steroid creams on and off

over the years. At one point, my physician suggested we add on ultraviolet light treatments, as well as full body wraps. Steroid creams mixed with moisturizer were applied to my skin and then it was covered with cotton wraps. There was just one

continued on p.4

Topics covered in this issue:

- * There is Hope - An Eczema Patient's Story
- * Useful Tips for Summer
- * Skin: the Body's Front Door to Asthma?
- * Winning the Battle Against the Itch-Scratch-Rash Cycle
- * Quick Poll for Eczema Patients
- * Myth/Fact



Ask the Doctor

Skin: The Body's Front Door to Asthma?

What if by stopping eczema, you could also stop asthma? The association between asthma or allergies and eczema is still controversial. But research is underway to determine whether allergies actually aggravate or cause eczema or if they are the result of a deficient skin barrier, through which antigens can penetrate. Could skin be the body's front door to asthma or allergies?

Clinicians have recently noticed that the worse the eczema, the higher the chances of childhood wheezing developing. And since the 1980's, a higher incidence of eczema correlating with the growing numbers of youngsters with asthma has led scientists to look more deeply into the link between the two.

A trial in the US will determine the efficacy of new drugs in preventing the production of immune system triggers that cause the eczema symptoms and later on asthma or allergies. Because eczema is often the earliest manifestation of the "atopic" disposition, this study will investigate how beneficial an early intervention can be in halting, not only eczema, but consequently asthma and possibly allergies.

Eczema is hereditary and it runs in families where there is a history of hay fever, allergies or asthma. Two-thirds of eczema patients will develop hay fever and approximately half will develop asthma.

This article was reviewed by Dr. David Thompson, Allergist at The Montreal General Hospital

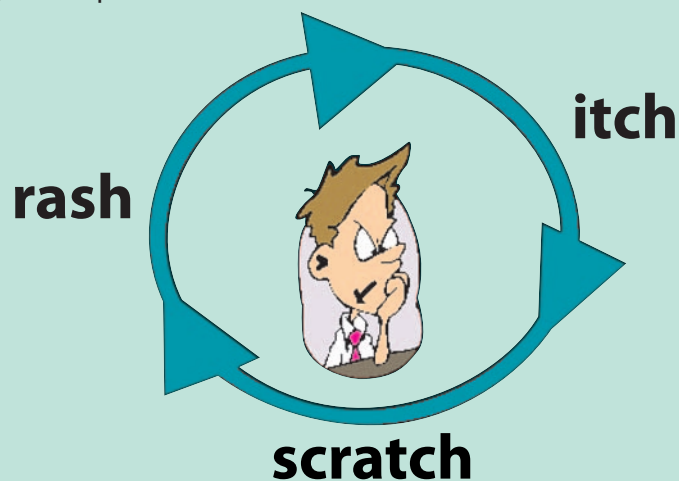
Winning the Battle Against the Itch-Scratch-Rash Cycle

You probably already know that eczema causes itching and that scratching is not good for your skin. But did you know why? Scratching can damage your skin, causing more inflammatory substances to be produced. As these substances cause more white blood cells to respond to the inflammatory reaction, there is an increase in redness and itching which, in turn, makes it harder to resist scratching.

This process is known as the itch-scratch-rash cycle and it can become so severe that it causes sleeplessness, irritability, stress, skin thickening, and intense pain. Scratching can tear or scrape the skin, causing bleeding and oozing, and allowing bacteria to enter the skin, where secondary infections may develop.

Try to stop this vicious cycle by doing the following:

- ⇒ Apply a moisturizer when you get the urge to scratch
- ⇒ Rub or pinch the area instead of scratching
- ⇒ Use medication to stop the itch (keeping it in the fridge will give you cool, maximum relief)
- ⇒ Keep fingernails short and clean and cover kids hands with cotton mittens when necessary



Myth: Most people affected by eczema will outgrow the disease.

Fact: 10 to 25 per cent of children suffer from eczema. The majority of eczema cases are diagnosed in early childhood, and it is estimated that while 40 percent of children suffering from eczema will outgrow the disease, others live with it throughout their entire lives.

Useful Tips for Summer

The most common problem for people with eczema during the summer months is perspiration as it leads to itchiness. So when shopping for summer clothes, remember to look for 100% cotton clothing, as it seems to provide the best comfort and it allows the skin to breathe. The harshness of synthetics, wool, hemp, or rough linen can irritate skin and cause a 'flare-up' of symptoms.

Not sure about swimming? Chlorine rarely triggers an allergic reaction but it can irritate sensitive skin. Make sure to take a shower after swimming to wash off chlorine, chemicals or salt, and put on a good dose of moisturizer and sunscreen if you plan on staying out in the sun.



Sign me up so I can receive upcoming information from the EASE program

Send me information by mail email

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Email: _____

Already a member of the EASE program? We still want to learn more about you!

1. Tell us about yourself

I have been diagnosed with eczema

I have a child diagnosed with eczema

Other, please specify: _____

2. Which of the following activities does eczema prevent you (or your child/other family member/friend) from doing?

Swimming

Sunbathing

Applying makeup

Having a pet

Eating some of the foods you like

Wearing shorts, skirts and t-shirts

3. Tell us your best tip for stopping the itch caused by eczema

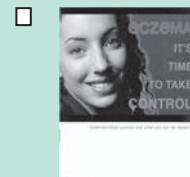
4. Would you be interested in sharing your story with other people suffering from eczema?

Yes

No

Simply fold this page to show the EASE address on one side and seal it. No need for a stamp, just toss in the mailbox — we are looking forward to hearing from you soon!

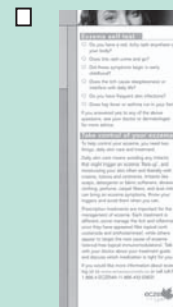
Check which of the following EASE material you would like to receive



Eczema - It's Time To Take Control

A comprehensive 36-page booklet on treatments, symptoms, skin care and patient support.

Also available in mandarin



The Eczema Self-Test

A double-sided illustrated tip card on eczema, its symptoms, causes and methods of control.



But It Itches So Much!

A colourful brochure with practical information for parents and children with eczema.



Penny's EGGS-im-ah storybook

An illustrated children's book explaining atopic dermatitis.

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There is HOPE!

(continued from cover)

problem with this treatment. I'm the type of person who is very conscious of other people's stares and comments, so I didn't want to leave the house with my entire body, even my hands, covered in a cotton wrap. I decided to stay home during that time.

All the treatments I tried worked in the short term, but soon my eczema would flare up again. I was blessed the day that my dermatologist suggested I try a new non-steroid ointment. After the first few days of using it, my skin began to burn. My husband said to forget it – the new treatment wasn't going to work. But I felt I had to give it a chance, and I'm so happy I did! After a week or so, my skin stopped burning and the tightness was going away. I couldn't believe my eyes! My skin was not dry, scaly or cracked. It actually looked smooth!

Over the past year, I've tried to stop using my medication and go back to using basic moisturizers but, after a week or two, I can feel my skin tightening up again. My routine now is to use lotion to moisturize in the morning and to apply my non-steroid treatment in the evening before bed. This routine works for me, and hopefully you will find one that allows you to live a normal, pain-free life.

There may be not cure for eczema, but there is no need for people to suffer needlessly. We may never be able to totally control stress or the many other triggers we come across on a daily basis but, if we can maintain our skin, feel comfortable and enjoy life then, in my opinion, we have reached our goal!

GOOD LUCK!



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Now available:

New educational material for children. Look us up this summer at www.eczemaCanada.ca for more details.

