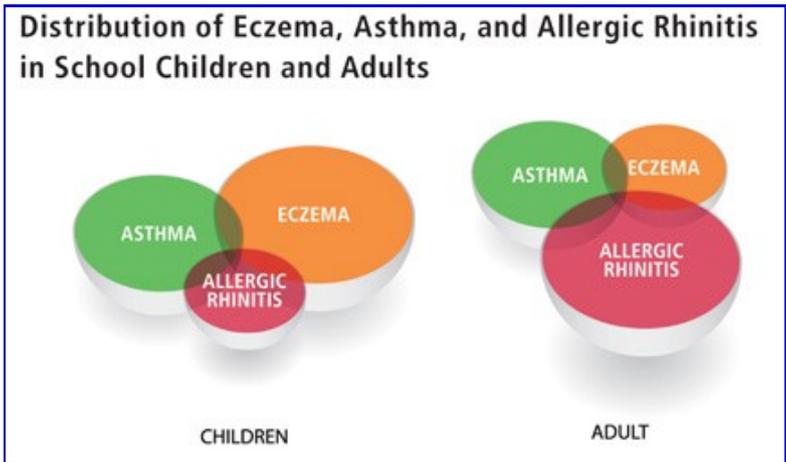




# Eczema and Allergies

Over the last few decades, the prevalence of eczema (also referred to as atopic dermatitis), asthma, and allergic rhinitis have been rising in industrialized countries. Currently, the lifetime prevalence of eczema is estimated to be between 10% to 20% in children and 1% to 3% in adults. Children with eczema often develop asthma and as adults develop allergic rhinitis (an allergic inflammation of the respiratory airways). This progression from eczema to allergic rhinitis has been termed **"the allergic march"**. Effectively treating the child at an early age minimises the progression to asthma and into adulthood of allergic rhinitis like "hayfever", and possibly sinusitis.

Common triggers in eczema include inhaled allergens, climate, emotional stress, hormones, food, irritants, and microbes. The most frequent inhaled allergens are animal danders, cockroach, dust mites, human dander, molds, and pollens. Cow milk, eggs, fish, peanuts, soy, tree nuts, and wheat are the most common foods allergies that can serve as triggers in eczema.



### Inhaled Allergens

- Animal dander
- Cockroach
- Dust mite
- Human dander
- Moulds
- Pollen

### Climate

- Sweating
- Winter months

### Emotional Stress

## Eczema Triggers

### Food

- Cows milk
- Eggs
- Fish
- Peanuts
- Soy
- Tree nuts
- Wheat

### Endocrine

- Menstrual cycle
- Pregnancy

### Irritants

- Bathing (hot water, soaps)
- Clothing (laundry detergents, synthetic fibres, wool)
- Foods (juice from fresh fruits)
- Cigarette smoke exposure
- Household disinfectants (solvents)

### Microbes

- Bacteria
- Fungi
- Viruses
- Yeast

Source: A Comprehensive Management Guide for Atopic Dermatitis. J. D. Peterson, L. S. Chan. Dermatol Nurs. 2006;18(6):531-542.

### Less known triggers of eczema:

*Preservatives, food additives.*

New insights in the pathogenesis of atopic disease. J. Ionescu. J Med Life. 2009 Apr-Jun;2(2):146-54.

*Antihistamines and corticosteroids.*

Allergic to Antihistamines---really! G. Stadtmayer, Allergy & Clinical Immunology, Oct 17, 2011.

*No cream will fix unhealthy skin. Chronic skin disorders require a holistic approach with a focus on dietary and lifestyle factors. It is necessary to not only remove any aggravating factors but also improve circulation, digestion, assimilation and elimination.*



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Helping children  
achieve their full  
potential

## Testing and Assessments for Allergy and Eczema

In initial assessment must include a thorough **case history** including triggers, family history and environmental factors.

### **Testing for allergies like asthma can include the following:**

**Skin Prick Test** - requires standardised extracts introduced into the skin by trained individuals. Can rapidly detect immunoglobulin E (IgE) related allergies but not non-IgE mediated allergies.

**Specific IgE Tests** - which identify specific reactive IgE antibodies in a blood sample to allergens, however only a limited number of IgE mediated allergies can be detected. Therefore results may be misleading.

**Specific IgG Tests** - delayed food reactivity reactions are identified by specific IgG antibodies to allergens. For completeness an IgA antibody panel should also be done.

**Full Blood Count (FBE)** - a standard blood test will include an eosinophil count. These white blood cells can be elevated in allergy, however they can also be elevated in parasitic infection and other diseases.

### Conventional Treatment

Conventional treatment ideally would involve the identification of allergens and any aggravating factors that exacerbate the symptoms of eczema. Pharmaceutical treatment relies mostly on topical glucocorticoids to reduce chronic inflammation and antihistamine for the itching.

### A Naturopathic Treatment Approach



There are a number of key treatment protocols to address the underlying cause of eczema.

- ✓ Dietary
- ✓ Immune modulation
- ✓ Stress
- ✓ Gastrointestinal support
- ✓ Inflammation
- ✓ Improve skin barrier function

### Dietary Approach

A simple approach is to eliminate all potentially allergenic foods, including: cows' milk products, eggs, wheat, rye, barley, peanuts corn, shellfish, bananas, apples, oranges,

potatoes, etc. I would highly recommend and support patients to do the **Failsafe Diet** as it also eliminates any foods containing **artificial colours, flavours or preservatives** that can often be missed.



### Gastrointestinal Support

The most important consideration in the treatment of skin conditions is the gastrointestinal tract. The focus is on confirming "leaky gut" through an **Intestinal Permeability Test**. Weakness between the cells in the gut lining allows toxins to enter the blood. As these are processed by the liver and immune system they contribute to the symptoms seen in eczema and other skin conditions. Gastrointestinal support is essential to promote a healthy gut wall and reduce the absorption of undigested food particles.

Dysbiosis, or imbalance of gastrointestinal bacteria has been associated with the development of eczema. Identifying the extent of the dysbiosis through a **Comprehensive Digestive Stool Analysis** and appropriate treatment and supplementation with specific probiotic species can improve eczema symptoms.

In recent studies specific strains of the probiotic, *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, resulted in a marked decrease in eczema symptoms. It is believed that they have an anti-inflammatory effect within the intestinal wall, contributing to the healing of the eczema.

### Immune Modulation

Modulating the immune response is inevitably involved in the management of inflammatory conditions such as eczema. This is done via reducing histamine (which contributes to the itching) and the use of anti-allergy herbs such as *Albizzia lebeck* or nutrients such as vitamin C, zinc and other nutrients.

### Inflammation

Inflammation is a key component of eczema, mainly linked to the overproduction of IgE antibodies, as a result of a dysregulated immune system. There is a role for essential fatty acids, such as gamma-linoleic acid and docosahexaenoic acid play a role in the management of the inflammatory response. The use of immunomodulatory herbs, such as Echinacea, Eleutherococcus and Withania are often used as well as zinc. There is substantial evidence that suggests that vitamin D and vitamin A help to modulate the allergic immune response. Vitamin A deficiency appears to increase the severity of eczema. This may be due to the importance of vitamin A in maintenance and repair of the gut lining.

### Stress

Stress has been found to enhance the allergic response. This may be due to cortisol (the stress hormone) having an inflammatory activity. Stress may also affect eczema by contributing to intestinal dysbiosis. This maybe due to increased bacterial adhesion to the bowel wall or decrease in the amount of *Lactobacilli* species in the gut. There are many herbs that can help with stress, such as *Eleutherococcus* and *Rhodolia*. Nutrients that support the nervous system, such as magnesium and the B group vitamins may also be indicated,

### Improving Skin Barrier Function

Maintaining the skin barrier is an important component to minimising the damage caused by eczema. It is understood that most of the issues surrounding the disturbance of the skin layer are due to altered fat composition in the skin layers. Nutrients that support the maintenance and repair of the skin, such as vitamin C, lycine, copper and others need to be considered. Herbs that promote the healing of the skin, such as *Centella* can be beneficial.

### Caution. When to Seek Professional Help

Children and teens with eczema are prone to skin infections, especially with staph bacteria and herpes virus. Seek professional help if you notice any of the early signs of skin infection, which may include:

- ⊗ increased fever
- ⊗ redness and warmth on or around affected areas
- ⊗ pus-filled bumps on or around affected areas
- ⊗ areas on the skin that look like cold sores or fever blisters

### Warning

Herbs can be very effective in the treatment of many conditions. Unfortunately there are many manufacturers that do not do any independent testing of their raw material. Therefore many products contain the wrong species, are adulterated with other substances and do not contain the active part of the plant. Only use practitioner quality herbal products to ensure the product contains the correct active herbal ingredients to get the required clinical results.