



Spring is here! Finally!

Director's Message



Canadians have suffered through a long and brutal winter, and those of us with eczema have felt the brunt of the dry, cold, skin-irritating weather. Thankfully spring is here, and we have some help for you.

Spring cleaning tips are at the top of the list. For me nothing feels as good as the coming of spring and doing a good refresh - the house, my office, and even taking stock of our skin care routines. Spring cleaning the home is important to help with eczema, as keeping dust low and the house clean is a priority for many eczema sufferers, but doing so without causing flares is equally important.

This newsletter also covers Patch Testing - a topic we get lots of questions about. Dr. Wingfield Rehmus, Vancouver based dermatologist helps us understand ear eczema and what can be done to ease the discomfort. In our Share Your Story feature we hear from a young mom who found help for her baby's severe eczema.

Wishing you all good health,

Amanda Cresswell-Melville

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Spring Cleaning for Eczema Sufferers

Helpful Tips to Remove Dust and Allergens



A clean home is important for people with eczema, as dust and allergens that settle on household surfaces can trigger an eczema flare. Here are some spring cleaning tips:

- Effectively removing dust from the home will help to reduce allergens in your house. Use special dry dusters or damp dusting cloths to remove dust from hard surfaces.
- Harsh chemical cleaners can actually add allergens and irritants to the air, but be aware that some products marketed as "green" or "environmentally friendly" may be harboring other allergens such as coconut ingredients or tee tree oil
- Vinegar diluted in water can be a good cleaner for surfaces and windows, and the addition of baking soda can make an effective scrub for bathrooms and kitchen sinks.
- Plain household bleach diluted in warm water is also an effective disinfectant. Be careful when using around surfaces that could become damaged or bleached, such as fabrics and natural stone counter tops.
- Use a high efficiency vacuum that has a filter
- Pet dander is present in most homes whether or not you have a cat or dog, as dander becomes air borne. If you do have pets, keep them out of bedrooms and off carpeted surfaces if possible.
- Use allergy certified bedding, mattress covers, and pillow cases when possible.
- Reduce dust in the bedrooms. Vacuum mattresses as part of your spring cleaning routine, and keep baseboards and bedroom surfaces as dust free as possible.
- Wash bedding regularly, such as weekly, to reduce allergens that settle on bedding, as well as to reduce the incidence of bacteria transfer from the skin.
- Mold can be a common allergen and eczema trigger. Your spring cleaning routine should include a cleaning of window sills and tracks, as this a common place for mold to accumulate. Use a mold removal product in bath rooms and showers where you see any black or orange accumulation, which can indicate mold growth.

For more information on spring cleaning to reduce allergens visit the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America <http://aafa.org/>

Ask the Doctor - Ear Eczema

Vancouver Dermatologist Helps with Ear Eczema Management

Q: *I have atopic dermatitis (eczema) but I also have crusting inside and behind my ears, which appears to be white and yellow. These areas are very itchy, and I would like to treat them. What can I do?*



A: ESC reached out to Vancouver based dermatologist Dr. Rehmus for some answers and advice.

"Thank you for the excellent question. I am sorry to hear that you are suffering from these itchy and crusted areas.

Involvement of the skin around the ears is quite common in atopic dermatitis and deserves special attention because it is cumbersome to treat and can be a signal that something else, such as infection or an allergic reaction, is going on at the same time.

People with atopic dermatitis often develop areas of involvement behind the ears, beneath the ears, and even inside of the ears. In theory, treatment is no different from on other places of the body, but it can be difficult in practice to apply treatments. In general, the skin should be treated gently with washing only using warm water and mild soaps if any soap at all. Scratching at the area or cleaning/rubbing with cotton swabs should be avoided because this can lead to increased irritation.

Moisturizers and over-the-counter hydrocortisone can be applied to the surrounding skin but might be difficult to apply into the ear canal itself. Speak to your doctor before treating the ear canal, as he or she can prescribe the right treatment for your condition, and will explain exactly how to use the treatment.

Cracking, crusting, and fissuring occur commonly in this location and often signal the presence of Staph aureus bacteria on the skin. Many find the addition of antibiotic creams or the use of saline compresses (1 tsp salt in 2 Cups water) or dilute bleach compresses (1 tsp bleach in 2 liters water) to be helpful additions to therapy and these might be recommended by your doctor. They should be applied only to the skin around and behind the ear unless specifically instructed by a doctor.

Allergic reactions can occur on the skin around the ears especially in people who also have atopic dermatitis. Common causes for chronic allergic reactions are nickel in earrings or contact with cell phones. Many of the antibiotic ointments that might be applied to treat the cracking/crusting can

also cause allergic reactions. These should be considered as possible compounding factors if the problems continue. So, if these simple measures do not take care of the problem, speak with your doctor as he or she might have recommendations for prescription medications that will be helpful in addition to routine home therapy.

This information is not to be taken as medical advice. As always, we recommend you speak with your doctor about the treatment that is right for your specific condition."

Dr. Wingfield Rehmus is a dermatologist at BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver and is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the University of British Columbia.

New Mom Finds Relief for her Baby with Eczema Society of Canada

My Life with Eczema Feature Story



Before: Red, uncomfortable eczema patches



After: Smooth skin and happy baby

After my baby boy turned 3 months old, he developed a terrible rash on his face. At first I dismissed the rash as I thought it was simply the result of saliva due to excessive use of his pacifier and drooling. After a month of no improvement, I took him to the doctor, who told me his rash was probably due to teething and that it was nothing to worry about.

The rash continued to worsen and actually became so bad that it began to bleed. I didn't even take pictures of him at his worst because it broke my heart to look at. The only picture I took was when the rash first started to develop. Our son was so uncomfortable and I just knew this had nothing to do with teething, so I began to do internet searches and came across pictures that looked just like what my baby was experiencing. It was eczema.

This condition was foreign to me, as neither I nor my husband had any family history of allergies or eczema. I decided to contact the Eczema Society of Canada, who immediately sent me a wealth of information about eczema as well as telephone support.

They emphasized moisturizing, and there are a number of moisturizers that have their Seal. The first product I tried worked like an absolute miracle. His eczema-ridden face was literally gone after two days of continuously using this amazing product and my son's face turned to baby-soft, clear

skin without even a trace of redness, scars or itchiness!

I am so thankful for the Eczema Society of Canada. Because of them, my son's eczema is completely controlled with three daily applications of cream. I am so thankful!

When Patch Testing can Help

Some Dermatologists offer Patch Testing

which may Help Find the Source of Eczema Suffering



Eczema can be a challenging and frustrating condition. One of the many subsets of eczema is contact dermatitis, a form of eczema that occurs from the skin coming in contact with certain substances. When your dermatologist suspects that something in your environment could be contributing to, or causing the flare he or she may consider patch testing.

What is a patch test?

Patch testing is a method of testing a substance on the skin to determine if someone will experience a reaction to that substance. The aim of the patch test is to find potential triggers for irritant dermatitis or contact dermatitis. The dermatologist usually takes a detailed medical history from the patient, and then determines which substances should be tested.

How is a patch test performed?

On the day of testing, it may be easiest to wear loose-fitting clothing that buttons in front. The person's back or inner thighs are usually marked with pen, to indicate which substance has been applied to each location. Then the substance is applied and covered with a patch for a period of time, typically 48 hours. The patches shouldn't get wet, so sponge bathing is usually advised instead of regular baths or showers.

After the patches have been in place for the specified amount of time, the doctor will remove them and examine the skin. The results will be interpreted two to four days after removing the patches, then again between five and seven days. The test won't work if the patches loosen or fall off.

What are some reasons a dermatologist might recommend a patch test?

- * When the eczema first appears in adulthood.
- * For chronic eczema that isn't responding to adherent treatment, which means the patient isn't following the treatment exactly as prescribed.
- * When there may be substances in the workplace that could be contributing to the condition.
- * When a refill is prescribed for topical corticosteroid or systemic therapy, such as oral steroids, or oral immunosuppressive drugs.

What substances can be tested?

Dyes, fragrances and resins can be tested. Although many types of skin care products can also be tested, those that are meant to be rinsed off such as shampoos and body cleansers can't be tested because they're likely to cause an irritant response, which means they would likely irritate the skin as they are not intended to be left on the skin.

How can I get patch tested?

A dermatologist will assess the patient's condition, and then decide if patch testing is appropriate. You can ask your dermatologist if patch testing might be helpful for you condition.

Note: Eczema Society of Canada always recommends that you work with your doctor and/or dermatologist to find a treatment course that is right for you and specific to your needs.

Source: Dr. Susan Nedorost - Lecture at American Academy of Dermatology Annual Meeting, March 2014, Denver.

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www.eczemahelp.ca

Help

Want to be a Support Volunteer? Contact us at
1-855-Eczema-1 or email us at
director@eczemahelp.ca

Hope

*"For support and resources,
there is no finer organization
than the Eczema Society of
Canada." Maryam Sanati,
Editor-in-chief, Chatelaine
Magazine*

