



Winter Eczema: It is what it is

Director's Message



It is what it is. Winter in Canada is in full force. From coast to coast this can mean dry, itchy, flared up skin. There's not much we can do about the weather, but we can control our skin care. This issue of our newsletter is dedicated to soothing dry, itchy winter skin. We learn about the skin barrier, and Dr. Joseph Lam is back teaching us about wet wrapping, and how this can help soothe eczema flares.

I've openly shared my family's struggle with eczema and my son Nate was recently interviewed for a news article, which is included. Nate's feelings on eczema are pretty simple, "It sucks" he tells us, but he knows what to do to manage his skin, and gets on with his life, including being an active athlete. His eczema doesn't hold him back, it is what it is. I spend most Saturday's watching him play basketball, and between plays he can be found scratching. The overheating, mixed with sweating causes his eczema to flare, but when we ask him if he would give up his basketball to calm his eczema he tells us, "NEVER!".

Wishing you all good health,

Amanda Cresswell-Melville

Amanda Cresswell-Melville
Executive Director

Ask the Doctor - Wet Wraps

Wet Wraps Can Help with Eczema Flares

Q: I hear a lot about wet wraps helping for eczema. What are they and can I do this at home?

A: We asked Vancouver based specialist, Dr. Joseph Lam, who treats a lot of eczema, to provide some insights on the subject: "Wet wraps are essentially a damp bandage over an area of inflamed skin (like eczema). They are often used in the hospital if a patient is admitted for eczema. However, they can be used at home as well - but the procedure does take time and a little bit of training.



Basically, there are 3 simple steps:

- 1) A thick moisturizer is placed on the inflamed skin (a steroid should only be used with wet wraps if you have been instructed by a physician).
- 2) A bandage (usually cotton gauze, but strips of soft cotton fabric could also work) is soaked in warm water and then squeezed so the bandage or fabric is damp - this is then placed over the cream.
- 3) A dry bandage is secured over the wet bandages (at home, dry cotton pyjamas work well). This can be left on overnight while sleeping. Some people even find these helpful and soothing for shorter periods of time, such as quiet time reading or watching a movie.

Wet wraps work because they help cool the skin, keep the skin moist, protect the skin from getting scratched, and (if steroids are used) they help increase the effectiveness of the topical steroid.

Usually 3 consecutive days of daily wet wrap therapy can dramatically improve a resistant area of eczema.

As with most therapies, it is best to speak with your doctor before using wet wrap."

*Give your children confidence and control
over eczema*

My Life with Eczema Feature Story

When Nate Melville talks about basketball, he sounds like a regular nine-year-old excited about a sport he loves. You would never know that years ago, playing any sport that might cause him to overheat or sweat was simply not an option.



Nate has eczema, a chronic skin condition that is characterized by red, itchy and dry skin. Often, children who have moderate to severe eczema are held back from playing sports that may cause excess sweating or overheating - two triggers which may lead to painful flare-ups. However, there's something different about Nate these days - he is in control of his condition, and it no longer controls him.

"When Nate was a year old, the majority of his body was red and raw due to severe eczema," says his mother, Amanda Cresswell-Melville, who is now the Executive Director of the Eczema Society of Canada (ESC). "My husband and I were desperate, and nearly out of hope. Searching for a cure or the cause of his eczema consumed us - we tried everything to rid Nate of his severe eczema, and lived in fear that he would struggle with pain and frustration his whole life."

The Melville family found solace when they met with the dermatology team at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids). With this expert instruction, they took a step back from seeking an unattainable miracle cure, and embraced the "regimen", which consists of frequent bathing and moisturizing, as well as prescription treatments when needed. Followed diligently, it is an effective way to treat and prevent flare-ups, while also carefully avoiding triggers. Within months, they had their lives back and Nathan was free from the excruciating pain that accompanied his skin at its worst.

The Melville's found their solution with a dermatologist, and with the Eczema Society of Canada. The impact of finding the ESC was significant, says Amanda, so she started to volunteer right away. Today, she acts as Executive Director and leads its programs, while helping thousands along the way.

When asked about what comes to mind when he thinks about eczema, Nathan's perspective is remarkable given what he has been through.

"I have to moisturize every day," he begins. "The cream feels cold and if I skip a bath or play basketball, I get itchy, but I know what to do when it happens, and am happy I can play sports, like basketball and soccer."

Best of all, says Amanda, his life is no longer dictated by what he can't do, and instead it's spent playing sports, spending time at the family cottage, and just being a kid.

Life with Eczema Events Help Answer Questions

November Awareness Month Events offer Support and Education



This year ESC hosted our annual Life with Eczema events in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto and all three events offered support and education to eczema sufferers. Leading Canadian dermatologists spoke on the topics of hand eczema and the connection between food, allergies and eczema, hot topics that eczema sufferers have many questions about.

ESC would like to thank Dr. Miriam Weinstein, Dr. Gillian de Gannes, Dr. Kirk Barber, and Dr. Neil Shear for their excellent talks. Special thanks go to our event volunteers Dan, Amy, Raymond, Sheila, Panteha, and Tanya. Gift bags were provided by CeraVe, a ceramide moisturizer which has earned our Seal of Acceptance.

Our most positive event feedback was on the Question and Answer session, which we will extend for our sessions in 2015, to provide more opportunities for attendees to benefit from the knowledge of our dermatology experts. We look forward to our events in 2015 and hope to reach new cities across Canada.



Soothing our skin barrier



Our skin provides a "barrier" to the outside world, in that it's somewhat waterproof and keeps our internal organs and systems safe from the elements and from bacteria invading our bodies.

Atopic dermatitis patients tend to have poor skin-barrier function. Their skin barrier may be broken down, causing it to lose moisture and allow bacteria to enter the body, which can lead to bacterial infections on the skin.

The loss of water leaves the skin dry and cracked. The goal of eczema management is to replenish moisture to create an effective skin barrier. Moisturizers can help do this.

The Eczema Society of Canada recommends the following 3 steps to managing your eczema and help repair the skin barrier:

- * Bathe, then moisturize
- * Use prescription treatments to reduce inflammation and bacteria
- * Avoid triggers to reduce flare-ups

An impaired skin barrier is damaged even more by scratching, but eczema is so itchy! Here are 4 ways to help reduce itchiness:

- * Apply moisturizers
- * Apply a cold pack or cold compress
- * Take a shower or bath
- * Use corticosteroids or prescription treatments as prescribed by your doctor

What else can you do?

Distract yourself! To help take your mind off your itchiness, do whatever you can to relax or make you think about something else, whether it's practicing yoga, meeting a friend or watching a movie. The good news is that before long, the itchy feeling will pass.

For more information on skin barrier and other eczema information, visit eczemahelp.ca/en/abouteczema.html

Eczema: The Rash that Itches, or the Itch that Rashes?

Why scratching makes us itchy!

Scientists finally solve the mystery of why we just can't stop



Article By Madlen Davies for MailOnline

Scratching feels good - and there is science to help explain this phenomenon. New research may lead to scientists being able to block certain receptors to stop itch.

Read full article [HERE](#)

Connect

Find a support volunteer at

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