



childhood eczema ON THE RISE:

What you should know about this incurable skin condition

By: Amanda Cresswell-Melville

The prevalence of eczema, or Atopic Dermatitis, is increasing. As many as six million Canadians suffer with this disease, an inflammatory skin condition that causes very dry, flaky, itchy skin. Eczema can occur at any age but most often affects infants and young children with the incidence in the industrialized world ranging from ten to 15 per cent. In addition to there being no cure, eczema can be difficult to manage, making it a frustrating and challenging disease for parents and patients to deal with.

While not life-threatening, eczema can dramatically impact the well-being and quality of life of those who live with it. Children often experience both psychological and physiological issues, and can experience negative self image and low self-esteem due to the effect of the disease on their appearance. A study of eczema patients found that 39 per cent of eight to 17-year old patients reported being teased or bullied because of the condition.

The good news is that there are medical treatments and at-home methods available, aimed at controlling and preventing inflammation and itching. Patrick is the father of a toddler with eczema and knows only too well about the stress and frustration surrounding his son's skin condition. With the disease seeming impossible to manage, Patrick reached out to the eczema community and found support in the Eczema Society of Canada (ESC), a registered Canadian charity, dedicated to helping eczema sufferers. "At a time of great frustration and feelings of helplessness ESC provided me the necessary support and tools to make a dramatic improvement." Gaining control over eczema and eczema-prone skin can greatly improve the quality of life for so many people living with the disease. Like leading medical experts within the eczema-care community, ESC advocates a daily simple regimen of bathing with a gentle cleanser and frequent application of a moisturizer. It is through this regimen that eczema patients and parents of children with eczema can see improvement in their skin condition.

"For the past four months, we've integrated 'the regimen' into our daily routine and have been delighted with the results," Patrick noted about the improvement in his son's eczema.

Preventing eczema occurrences

The basics of preventing or reducing the occurrence of eczema flares include avoiding known triggers such as wool or synthetic clothing, harsh soaps and laundry detergents, dust mites, perfumed lotions, excessive heat, and low humid conditions. Keeping your child's skin well moisturized, and

nails trimmed, will help to reduce further inflammation and skin damage due to itching. For people with eczema-prone skin, it is necessary to recognize and avoid triggers to effectively manage the disease.

It's important for eczema sufferers to avoid dry skin. You should give your child a daily bath using luke warm water and a mild, moisturizing cleanser. After getting out of the bath or shower, gently pat your child's skin dry, leaving the skin damp. The final step should include covering your child with a moisturizer as soon as possible to seal the moisture into his or her skin.

To help consumers navigate the often confusing and overwhelming skin care aisles, ESC developed a Seal of Acceptance program. Skin care products created for people with eczema must meet rigorous criteria and undergo testing in order to receive the Seal. A new product line, Cetaphil Restoradeem Eczema Moisturizing Wash & Lotion, joins Aveeno Eczema Care Moisturizer, Cleanser and Baby Products, as the only two product lines to have earned ESC's Seal of Acceptance. Both are formulated with ceramides which work to improve the skin's moisture barrier - an exciting breakthrough for eczema sufferers.

If you think you or a family member has eczema, please consult your doctor or dermatologist regarding treatment. For more information on eczema, visit the Eczema Society of Canada's website at www.eczemahelp.ca.

Amanda Cresswell-Melville is the Executive Director for the Eczema Society of Canada, a registered Canadian charity, dedicated to helping eczema sufferers, and is also a mother of a child living with eczema.

ECZEMA FAST FACTS:

- Eczema is not contagious
- Eczema is most common in children, and about half will grow out of it
- Frequent bathing is recommended in order to keep the skin hydrated, and follow all baths and showers with an application of moisturizer, ideally within 3 minutes of exiting the water
- Wear and sleep on soft natural fabrics
- Avoid harsh soaps and detergents, scented products and perfumes