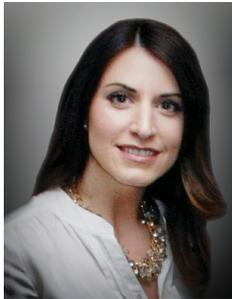




November is Eczema Awareness Month

Director's Message



November is Eczema Awareness Month, and the Eczema Society of Canada wants to take this opportunity to not only raise awareness, but to celebrate the bravery, perseverance, and humility of every Canadian living with eczema each and every day of their lives.

To honour these individuals, we recently launched our "Faces of Eczema" photo book - a touching and honest look into the lives of Canadians living with this often frustrating and overwhelming condition.

It aims to show the world that despite living with a chronic and visible skin condition, the individuals in this book lead vibrant, happy, and fulfilling lives.

And you can too.

We also chose to include a heartfelt and beautifully-written perspective on our photo book by a fellow sufferer. We follow up with a 'Share your Story' feature, written by a mother who passes on what she has learned throughout her years of caring for a child with eczema. Her article focuses on valuable tips based on years of navigating the unlimited information (both good and bad) available to us online.

This awareness month, we wish to encourage empathy, acceptance, and bravery in those affected by eczema. If you would like to get involved - whether through fundraising, donating, or as a volunteer - we would love your help. Contact us today at info@eczemahelp.ca and let's keep working together to make a difference.

Wishing everyone good health,

Amanda Cresswell-Melville
Executive Director
Eczema Society of Canada

Faces of Eczema Photo Book

Celebrating the Truth, Beauty and Strength of Canadians Living with Eczema



To celebrate Awareness Month, we are proud to announce the release of *Faces of Eczema*, a photo book that shows the world that despite having eczema, we can live vibrant, fulfilling lives.

The book features ten inspiring Canadians, each living with different types of eczema. Hailing from coast-to-coast, both young and old, their stories are diverse in their experiences as well as challenges. Each beautiful photo was captured with the generous help of volunteer photographers.

"While eczema is often a visible disease, the associated pain, itch and suffering can exist regardless of how the skin appears from the outside," says Amanda Cresswell-Melville, Executive Director, Eczema Society of Canada. "We hope this book sheds light on what is going on below the surface, while also encouraging empathy, understanding and acceptance."

In the spirit of embracing individuality and body-positivity, this photo book is a celebration of the strength and bravery of those who live with this chronic and often debilitating condition. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed creating it.

A few excerpts from *Faces of Eczema*:

"Vanessa was born with dry skin and developed eczema by three months old... [Her parents] often avoided taking her photo during flares because they thought the photos depicted her suffering. They now regret this, as her eczema is a part of who she is." - Vanessa's parents

"Most of my life, I've wanted to hide in the shadows, ashamed of my red, dry, wrinkled, flaky skin. I felt dirty and ugly... One day, I felt that acceptance was the only path for me. I've decided to come out of the shadows and step into the light to see my own beauty, both outer and inner." -- Sylvia

"Despite living with moderate-to-severe eczema all her life, Tanya does not hold back on living life to the fullest... "Although the heat and sun often irritate my skin, I love to travel and do not let this condition restrict my love for adventure." - Tanya

The *Faces of Eczema* photo book is available online at
<https://eczemahelp.ca/faces-of-eczema/>

OR

To request a physical copy, free of charge, send an email to
info@eczemahelp.ca with "FACES" in the subject line.

November is Eczema Awareness Month

Looking to Create Awareness in Your Community



Canada Helps, found at canadahelps.org, is a secure online fundraising platform. to help raise funds for Eczema Society of Canada. Consider making a donation today! No amount is too small, and every amount makes a difference. 100% of private citizen donations go directly to eczema research.

Make a donation in the name of the loved one, and send a digital Canada Helps donation card to a loved one.

There are three ways you can donate:

- (1) Visit CanadaHelps.org for secure online donation.
- (2) Visit the Eczema Society of Canada donation page for secure online donation through Pay Pal.
- (3) Make a personal cheque donation to Eczema Society of Canada and mail it to: 411 The Queensway South, PO Box 25009, Keswick, Ontario, L4P 4C2, Canada.

There are so many ways you have probably heard of fundraising: giving money, volunteering your time, or donating gently used goods. But have you considered becoming a fundraiser for Eczema Society of Canada to raise money and spread the word? You don't need to be a professional and you don't need to wait for an occasion. With CanadaHelps.org Fundraising Pages, it's easy to turn every day gatherings into a unique fundraising opportunity. From hosting a dinner party, putting on a basketball tournament to a day at the beach, CanadaHelps.org enables you to turn any occasion into a memorable one. So gather your friends and family and start your own eczema fundraiser today!

Ask the Specialist Feature

Cream, ointment, lotion or gel?



Q: *What's the difference between creams, ointments, lotions and gels?*

A: Pharmacist Ian Tin Yue Wong answered this common question in a recent publication:

When you're choosing an over-the-counter or prescription topical product, it can be difficult to decipher the differences between the various products available. With help from your physician or pharmacist, you should aim to select a medication that is best for your particular skin type and specific condition.

Wet or dry? Understanding absorption levels

A "base" or "vehicle" is the product with which an active ingredient is combined in order to help it be absorbed by the skin. There are several types of bases, and most drugs are available in various different bases to ensure the best penetration in the skin.

Different areas of skin have specific properties. For example, the skin on your face or underarms is much thinner than that on your palms or soles. Thinner skin means easier absorption of drugs. In these cases, a lighter, more quick-drying base such as a lotion or gel might be recommended. Thicker skin, for example on the elbows, may require an ointment to improve drug penetration. Individuals with cracking eczema on the hands might find that an ointment works best, since it will be less irritating and will stay on the skin longer than other bases, which will improve penetration of the drug and prevent moisture from escaping. Lotions are emulsions of oil in water, whereas creams are emulsions of water in oil.

Other factors

Your skin is also exposed to external factors such as the cold, sun, chemicals combinations, and even medications. Did you know some medications can cause a negative reaction when your skin is exposed to the sun? Furthermore, your hobby or job could be aggravating your skin and hinder your treatment. For example, hairdressers, nurses and dishwashers can be exposed to chemicals and other factors that can further aggravate their skin. A health-care professional can help you to select the best topical for your lifestyle. Remember to always follow the treatment instructions. Topicals can take time to apply and the results are not instant, but sticking to your treatment plan is the best way to move towards healthier skin. Be honest with your health-care team about your treatment plan. Ask a pharmacist or dermatologist for help if you have questions.

Ian Tin Yue Wong, BSc (Pharm), is a practicing pharmacist in Vancouver and a fourth-year medical student at the University of British Columbia with a special interest in dermatology and eczema.

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The Stories Beyond our Skin

A first-hand perspective of the "Faces of Eczema" photo book

By Cymbria Wood

Our skin is our most intimate organ. We learn ourselves first through touch. But ironically, it's also our most public. Eczema challenges both ends of this spectrum. I'm nervous sitting down to write about my impression of this powerful photo book, *Faces of Eczema*, and so without thinking my fingers reach for the comfort of the itch. Like the Canadians featured on its pages, photographed with such poetic sensitivity, I've had to find my own intimacy with this agonizing skin condition.



There is no helplessness on these pages. These are battles still being fought, but being won. The picture of young Stephan brought tears to my eyes. He's holding his hands with all the wisdom and grace of an old sage - perfectly juxtaposed against the innocence of a comic book. It's an image I won't forget, taken by hands that know the same suffering. We either learn to accept the chaos of life, or lose ourselves to its tortures. It's a choice every person must make, but eczema brings it up to the surface of our skin. So we are allowed to know it and fight it face to face.

Not the face! Just not the face! My own private deal failed this year as red stretched (albeit briefly) up along the left side of my nose. I covered it up. And then I didn't. I was terrified to share my leg with you. And now I'm not. Because I'm not alone. My cousins and I used to compare scars at the end of every summer and my pirate leg is now my trophy. Like the inspirations in this gorgeous photo book, I've found the gifts hidden in the struggle. I am my own beauty now, like Sylvia; my own strength, like Danielle.



This book is filled with so much love, so much bravery. It transcends the clinical in a celebration of our shared Canadian humanity. In this digital age of airbrushing and emojis, it's such a gift to have a hard copy hand to hold.

Cymbria is a Calgary writer/illustrator/designer who lives with eczema and her golf-mad husband - though not in that order. Discover more of her work on her blog BlankCanvasLiving.com.

Living with Eczema and Achieving Mental Wellness

*By Ian Tin Yue Wong and
Brian Y. Cho, MD*



Eczema is too often inappropriately viewed by the public, health care providers and patients as a benign skin condition with solely physical manifestations. On the contrary, beyond the physical burden of eczema, living with eczema can place tremendous strain upon one's mental wellbeing.

Depression is the persistent state of feeling of despair or low mood with impairment of several facets of life including decreased interest, appetite change, sleep change, fatigue, decreased concentration, and feeling of worthlessness and self-harm. Anxiety is the unexpected or unhelpful sense of worry or nervousness that impairs multiple aspects of life such as one's feelings, thoughts and actions. Both depression and anxiety are prevalent in individuals living with eczema. Both depression and anxiety are capable of inflicting significant insults upon one's psychiatric health. Therefore, addressing mental health in individuals living with eczema through early recognition and various forms of therapy is imperative. Ultimately, health care providers must not simply treat the skin disorder, but must also treat the individual living with the skin disorder encompassing their physical and psychosocial experience.

Below, we share strategies to strive towards achieving mental wellness right here, right now.

Identify and communicate with your support network

- The opportunity to share and vocalize your day-to-day experience living with eczema with supportive individuals that you can trust is a key step in appreciating and addressing the psychosocial impact of eczema.
- Support networks can come in many forms from family and friends to patient support groups such as the Eczema Society of Canada.
- Finding others who understand your experience is often helpful as it is important to always remember that you are not alone.
- Connecting with others opens up the opportunity for you to learn new things to help you feel better and to build confidence and self-esteem.

Address your stress and ask for help

- Stress can come from many different sources such as relationships, job and family. Eczema can also be a source of stress and triggered by stress.
- Become an active participant in managing your stress. There are various relaxation techniques including meditation, yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery and deep breathing that one can employ. Try out each technique and see which method works best for you and is most realistic and effective for you to use in stressful situations.
- In some individuals, stress can lead to debilitating depression and anxiety. In these circumstances, psychiatrists, specialists in mental health, can help optimize the biologic and psychosocial aspects of care which include medications and psychotherapy.

Get enough sleep

- If your eczema is preventing you from achieving a good night's sleep, communication with your health care provider is of utmost importance.
- Under the supervision of your health care provider, they can provide guidance on non-drug measures, such as sleep hygiene, or may prescribe an anti-histamine for short-term use to temporarily relieve your itch and assist in sleep.
- Poor sleep quality is known to impact workplace productivity, mental health, health behaviours, and perceived health.

Empower yourself with knowledge

- Becoming knowledgeable about what eczema is, its triggers, and the role of moisturizers and other therapies will help you develop confidence in caring for your own skin and recognizing when to ask for appropriate help.
- Also, knowledge will help you develop self-esteem as you have the opportunity to educate others who may have misconceptions about eczema.

¹Ian Tin Yue Wong, BSc(Pharm)

²Brian Y. Cho, MD (UBC Psychiatry R2)

¹Ian Tin Yue Wong, BSc (Pharm), is a practicing pharmacist in Vancouver and a fourth-year medical student at the University of British Columbia with a special interest in dermatology and eczema.

²Brian Y. Cho, MD, is a second-year psychiatry resident in the University of British Columbia psychiatry residency program.

Inflammation and Itch Control at the Centre of Eczema Care

Report from the American Academy of Dermatology Annual Conference



At the American Academy of Dermatology Annual Conference this past March, Dr. Margaret Lee, director of pediatric dermatology at Children's Hospital Boston presented on the management of eczema in children. Dr. Lee indicated that eczema care needs to focus on limiting and reducing inflammation (the redness and swelling associated with eczema flares) and a focus on reducing

itching and scratching.

Inflammation can be managed by topical treatments, and eczema sufferers should work with their doctor to develop a regimen of flare control that is suitable for them. Reducing itching and scratching can be achieved through skin care and behavioural interventions. Skin care interventions would include appropriate bathing and moisturizing. Moisturizing the skin reduces dryness which in turn reduces itch, which can reduce the inflammatory process that causes the eczema flare. Behavioural interventions for scratching may include distraction (read a favourite book, or go for a walk) and keeping hands busy doing things other than scratching (such as knitting, squeezing a stress ball, playing a video game, or crafting, such as origami or bead work).

Dr. Lee also advises against saying "Don't scratch" to your children or loved ones who suffer with eczema. This message creates a negative dynamic within the family, and can lead children to hide scratching. There is also the potential for the child to experience guilt and shame related to their scratching, a behaviour that they cannot help.

To learn more about eczema management, and strategies for eczema bathing and moisturizing, visit eczemahelp.ca

We're making a difference,
and you can help us reach our goals.

Every step toward research is a step toward a cure



We desperately need better care and more research for eczema and you can help.

Eczema Society of Canada (ESC) is furthering Canadian eczema research through our Research Grant Program. In the past year ESC has funded two university centre research projects.

Each and every one of your donations (that's 100% of private citizen donations) go directly to eczema research grants through our grant program.

All donations \$20 and greater are eligible for an official tax receipt, and no donation is too small.

Eczema Society of Canada is partnered with Canada Helps for secure online donations. Donate now through [Canada Helps](http://CanadaHelps.com).



Together we are making a difference.

Eczema Events in Quebec this November

***Itch. Burning. Sleepless nights. Painful skin.
Do you live like this?***

Familiprix is hosting an conference led by local pharmacists, and Eczema Society of Canada will be there with our educational exhibit! Topics include practical tips to support people living with eczema.

NICOLET

November 29, 2017
Pierre Théberge et Judith Savoie
110, boul. Louis-Fr chet
Niclet
819 293-2131

COWANSVILLE

November 30, 2017
Pierre, Judith et Fran ois Marziali
1599, rue du Sud, Cowansville
450 263-2171

Register in-store today!

This event is produced and managed by the Familiprix. Eczema Society of Canada is participating with an educational exhibit at the events and is not responsible or liable for the content of the pharmacist presentation. To learn more about Eczema Society of Canada visit www.eczemahelp.ca

Connect

Find a support volunteer at
www.eczemahelp.ca

Eczema Help

Contact us at 1-855-Eczema-1 or email us at
info@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*