



Eczema and Quality of Life

Director's Message



The itch. The pain. We know the toll eczema can take, and for many, it dictates our lives, and when the itch starts, sometimes it's difficult to think about anything else. In this issue, we are putting quality of life front and center.

This September ESC launches our **Atopic Dermatitis Quality of Life Report: Moderate-to-Severe Disease**, which contains our recent patient survey results. This report gathered feedback from more than 1,000 Canadians about their experiences of living with atopic dermatitis (AD). It not only highlights the impact of moderate-to-severe eczema on areas such as sleep, social activities, and mental health, but also outlines the strong need for better treatment options, greater awareness, and deeper understanding of this debilitating condition. We hope this is a wake-up call to Canada, and invite you to read the report and share it among your friends and family.

This issue also includes a moving 'Share your Story' feature about a young Canadian's deeply personal account of living with eczema, and how it has affected her mental health over the years. We also talk about eczema and anxiety, and provide coping tips and tools. Finally, we include a reminder that our Research Grant Program deadline is quickly approaching.

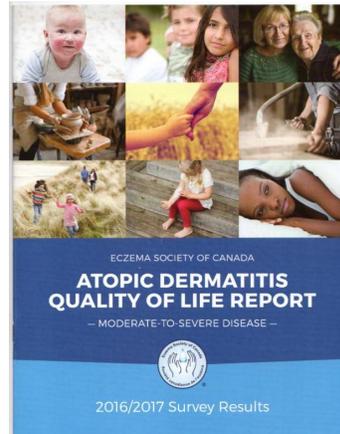
We want to remind everyone that if you are struggling, ESC is here to provide emotional support, guidance, and resources to help manage your condition. We are always here to talk, or connect you with someone who can help. You are never alone, and we will continue to fight for each and every Canadian living with eczema.

Wishing you all good health,

Amanda Cresswell-Melville
Executive Director
Eczema Society of Canada

ESC releases Atopic Dermatitis Quality of Life Report

Survey data confirms significant quality of life impact for eczema sufferers and their families



The Eczema Society of Canada/ Société canadienne de l'eczéma has released its **Atopic Dermatitis Quality of Life Report: Moderate-to-Severe Disease**, which provides an in-depth look at the impact of moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis - commonly known as eczema - on the lives of Canadians.

The report details survey results from over 1,000 Canadians living with this condition, and sheds light on the burden of this debilitating, chronic skin disease. Canadians living with atopic dermatitis face significant challenges when it comes to lack of treatment options and the impact on sleep, mental health, and daily activities.

"We hear from parents and patients about their daily struggles with the pain and itch, and understand their deep desire for a solution," says Amanda Cresswell-Melville, Executive Director, Eczema Society of Canada. "We developed this report to give a voice of those struggling, and to let them know we are fighting to help them find control through better care and more choice."

According to the report, here are some examples of how Canadians living with moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis are impacted on a daily basis:

Adult Survey Insights:

- 29 per cent report having used 15 or more different treatments to manage their disease.
- One in two reports losing eight nights of sleep or more each month.
- One in three reports missing work or important life events due to their disease, and 30 per cent have had to change their job.
- 42 per cent of adult respondents visited a doctor four or more times in the past two years to manage their disease, and 27 per cent have waited six months or longer to see a dermatologist.

Children's Survey Insights:

- Seven out of ten children report experiencing sleep loss due to their disease, and one out of five has missed school due to their eczema.
- 30 per cent have reported difficulty participating in sports or physical activity, and 30 per cent experience anxiety related to their disease.
- There is also a significant impact on caregivers with 63 per cent experiencing physical, mental, or emotional stress.
- The financial impact is evident as well - nearly a third (30 per cent) say they have had financial challenges related to their child's disease.

There is a clear need for change. For more than a decade, there has been an absence of new medications, however, Canada is on the cusp of a new era in care. Due to recent breakthroughs in

research, Canadians may soon have access to more options.

"This report demonstrates that Canadians with moderate and severe atopic dermatitis are greatly impacted by their disease. Sleep, social interactions and work life can all be affected," says Dr. Aaron Drucker, MD, ScM, FRCPC. "Participants in the survey also noted many unmet needs, including difficulty accessing specialty care and inadequacy of current treatments."

This report demonstrates the true burden of disease, and the need for awareness and better care. Safe and effective treatments are desperately needed for Canadians living with moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis that does not respond to current therapies. We invite you to share the report on social media and among your friends and family.

To download a copy visit www.eczemahelp.ca/Quality-of-Life-Report or to to order a FREE print copy email us at info@eczemahelp.ca.

Ask the Doctor Feature

What does the term 'Quality of Life' mean?



Q: I hear a lot of talk about "quality of life" and "burden of disease" related to atopic dermatitis (eczema) and many diseases these days. What do those terms mean and why all the recent buzz around these topics?

A: "Quality of life" means exactly what it sounds like it would mean - the way a condition or disease affects day-to-day living. "Burden of disease" is an expression that is often confused with quality of life. ESC asked dermatologist Dr. Aaron Drucker, who is an expert in atopic dermatitis and burden of disease, for some clarification on this subject. "It is important for doctors, researchers, insurance providers and governments to understand as best they can how diseases impact patients and society as a whole. The terms quality of life and burden of disease are used to conceptualize those impacts." says Dr. Drucker. "Health-related quality of life deals with how someone's health affects their day-to-day living. How much does it affect their work, school, or sleep? How much does it affect their social or personal life? Burden of disease is a broader concept that includes quality of life and other aspects such as the money spent to treat a disease, how many people in a population have a given disease, and so on. As one can imagine, atopic dermatitis can have a tremendous impact on quality of life and burden of disease for patients and their families. Additionally, given how common atopic dermatitis is, its burden for society as a whole is quite large." These topics help to create greater understanding that eczema is not just dry, itchy skin.

Dr. Aaron Drucker, MD, ScM, FRCPC is a Toronto-based dermatologist with expertise and interest in atopic dermatitis and burden of disease. ESC thanks Dr. Drucker for his ongoing contributions to our organization and to atopic dermatitis patients in Canada

Share Your Story Feature

Living with Eczema: My Personal Experience



By Taylor DeGruchy

I am a third year student in the Dalhousie University College of Pharmacy program in Halifax, Nova Scotia and I am grateful to have the opportunity to share my personal experience with eczema with you all. I was first introduced to the Eczema Society of Canada a few months ago, through an information session at our local library.

Having a chronic skin condition has affected my life more than I ever would have imagined. Since birth, my eczema has always been unpredictable. I experienced my first major flare up at age 13, which affected my elbow and knee joints, wrists, scalp, and shoulders. At that time, my family and I were hopeful that I would 'grow out of it' and leave the challenges related to my condition behind. Unfortunately, this was not the case. As I progressed through the public school system, I found myself becoming more self-conscious about my skin. Classmates would tease me and question why my skin looked so red and crusty all the time. The burning pain and inflammation from sweating during a taekwondo fight as well as the bleeding, oozing skin from many sleepless nights of scratching allowed people to physically see the toll eczema had taken on my body. What they couldn't see was the potent effect the condition had on my psychological well-being. I've tried many drug therapies including topical corticosteroids, antihistamines, and immunomodulators as well as non-drug treatments such as colloidal oatmeal baths, humidifiers, and compresses with minimal relief. Many days I would refuse to leave the house, living in continuous fear of someone seeing my face at its worst. In addition to my dermatologic related appointments, I have spent many days in my physician's office discussing how my eczema affects my mental health each and every day. Although I continue to struggle with the neurologic repercussions related to eczema, I am becoming more comfortable talking to those I trust which takes a great weight off of my shoulders.

My face and scalp are the latest mysteries I am trying to solve. Given the extreme dryness, the only products that would allow for any relief were lipophilic ointment bases, which in turn, lead to breakouts of acne vulgaris. I felt as if I was stuck inside a vicious cycle, where treating the dry skin led to acne, and treating or covering up the acne led to dry skin. My skin care regimen is expensive, time-consuming, and draining. I am hoping that after the seven month wait period, my dermatologist and I will be able to find a regimen that will work better for me. Eczema continues to impact my daily life, however, I am extremely proud of myself for overcoming the many obstacles that I have faced related to my condition. Over the years, I have come to accept my skin for the way it is, which has greatly increased my quality of life. One day, I hope we find a cure, but until then, I will continue to carry my skin care products wherever I go and make appropriate lifestyle changes depending on the time of the year.

I look forward to becoming more involved in the Eczema Society of Canada, both as a patient and future health care professional. I encourage you all to share your experiences with one another, enabling us all to learn and have a strong support system now and in the years to come.

Coping with your skin-related anxiety

Feature from Canadian Skin Magazine



Written by: Priya Dhir

Anxiety is a normal human emotion everyone experiences from time to time. Anxiety turns into a disorder when its symptoms interfere with a person's ability to lead a normal lifestyle. Anxiety activates the stress response in the body, otherwise known as the fight-or-flight response. This causes the body to produce stress hormones. These chemical messengers are secreted into the bloodstream and travel to different parts of the body to bring about physiological, psychological and emotional changes. This response enhances the body's ability to deal with the stress, and either fight or flee from it. Another part of the brain, the limbic system, is a key area for the regulation of emotions and anxiety. The amygdala is an almond shaped structure that is part of the limbic system and it is key for anxiety. The cells in the amygdala are activated more readily in individuals with anxiety.

Your skin and the link to anxiety

Anxiety disorder can result from the emotional effects associated with skin disease. This is known as a secondary psychiatric disorder. About 30 per cent of individuals with a skin disease are thought to have secondary psychiatric disorders, such as anxiety disorder. Examples of skin diseases that are linked to anxiety disorder include vitiligo, psoriasis, rosacea, hidradenitis suppurativa, acne, alopecia and ichthyosis. Anxiety disorder can also be present in people suffering disfigurement or burns.

When to seek professional help

People who have anxiety disorder as a consequence of skin disease often change their behaviour in order to avoid anxiety-provoking situations. This might include avoiding being intimate with a partner, missing work and declining social invitations. When these changes in behaviour and the physical symptoms of anxiety interfere with daily life, it is recommended that the individual seeks professional help.

Symptoms of ANXIETY

Anxiety symptoms are symptoms of stress. Everyone is unique, so the type, number, intensity and frequency of symptoms will vary from person to person. One individual might have a single mild anxiety symptom, whereas another person might experience all of anxiety symptoms and to a greater severity and frequency. Whether mild or severe, individuals living with an anxiety disorder can have the following symptoms:

- Increased arousal
- Difficulty sleeping, restlessness or irritability
- Heart palpitations
- Nervous stomach
- Throat tightness
- Muscle weakness
- Sweating
- Light-headedness
- Headaches

Working with a therapist or a counsellor can be effective in overcoming anxiety. If not addressed, anxiety will return time and again.

Tools used to help with anxiety

The successful management of anxiety depends on educating the individual and their significant others about the interaction between the skin disease and the anxiety disorder. Therefore, once a skin disorder has been diagnosed, both dermatological and psychological aspects must be addressed. A multidisciplinary approach involving a family physician, psychiatrist, dermatologist and

psychologist is essential.

1. **Cognitive-behavioural therapy:** Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is the most widely used treatment for anxiety disorders. Cognitive therapy examines how negative thoughts contribute to anxiety, while behavioural therapy examines how the individual behaves and reacts in situations that trigger anxiety. The basic premise of CBT is changing the individual's perception of a situation, which then determines how that individual feels. A therapist will work with the individual to form realistic and calming statements that can help when faced with anxiety causing situations.
2. **Hypnosis:** Hypnosis is sometimes used alongside CBT for those with anxiety disorders. It involves guiding the individual into a state of narrowed awareness, focused attention and heightened relaxation. A hypnotherapist uses different therapeutic techniques to help reduce anxiety and the pain associated with some dermatologic procedures.
3. **Exercise, yoga and meditation:** Research has shown that 30 minutes of exercise three to five times a week can be an effective method for reducing anxiety. Yoga can induce relaxation and thus reduce stress. Meditation produces a relaxing, stress-reducing state similar to that of hypnosis. It should be practiced regularly as a discipline to maintain effectiveness. Local community centres often offer a variety of fitness classes, in addition to yoga and meditation.
4. **Medication:** Medication can be used to decrease anxiety symptoms, but will not cure the underlying problem and is not a long-term solution. Anxiety medications also come with many side effects, including the risk of addiction. A family physician will help you to determine whether medication is a good choice for you. Many different types of medications are used in the treatment of anxiety disorder, including antidepressants, benzodiazepines and beta-blockers.

5 QUICK TIPS TO Reduce Anxiety

- Plan your day. Having too much or too little to do can make you feel more anxious.
- Keep a journal. Look for patterns and discuss these with a friend to help reduce stress.
- Get involved. Volunteer in your community in order to create a support network.
- Limit caffeine, alcohol and nicotine intake. They increase anxiety levels.
- Practice positive self-talk. To increase emotional comfort, such as "I will get through this" or "I am feeling anxious now, but I have the power to make myself feel calm."

Conclusion

Anxiety disorder that results from an underlying skin disease can be treated, and the sooner the treatment is started, the better the outcome you can expect. Effective treatment requires honest communication with your healthcare professional. In addition to seeking treatment, it can also be helpful to join a support group to talk with other people with similar symptoms. Ask your healthcare provider about the resources available in your area.

Priya Dhir is an Honours Biology and Psychology student at the University of Waterloo. Her course-based research project focuses on the effects of anxiety and arousal on sport performance.

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Eczema Research Grant Program
Closing Soon for Applications

[Apply Today!](#)



The Eczema Society of Canada (ESC) is dedicated to improving the lives of Canadians living with eczema, by providing support, education, and raising awareness. Supporting ongoing research activities is an important part of our mission.

The ESC Research Grant Program allows Canadian researchers the opportunity to apply to access funding for their research and/or eczema education projects. ESC is pleased to invite Canadian researchers, including dermatologists, paediatricians, residents, and medical and university students to apply today for this exciting funding opportunity. Applications can include research and/or educational projects that will work toward improving the lives of eczema sufferers.

The application deadline is September 30th 2017. Awards will be announced in November during Eczema Awareness Month. Every step towards research is a step toward a cure.

For more information visit www.eczemahelp.ca/ResearchGrantApplication or contact Executive Director Amanda Cresswell-Melville at director@eczemahelp.ca or 1-855-ECZEMA-1

ESC is pleased to support Camp Liberté

Helping send children with eczema to camp!



"Thank you for making a dream come true for so many children and especially my daughter...she had a wonderful time. She has only good memories and is still talking about it".

- Parent of Camp Liberté attendee



Camp Liberté Society was established by a group of Dermatologists in 2009, in partnership with the Canadian Dermatology Association, and provides a summer camp experience to children living with severe atopic dermatitis (eczema).

In addition to typical camp activities, campers receive intense skin care and disease management workshops throughout the camp. While the camp addresses a variety of skin conditions, over half of the campers suffer with eczema. Eczema Society of Canada is proud to announce they have provided Camp Liberté with a grant of \$20,000. This will help support eczema campers at both the camp for young children, held in Quebec, and the camp for pre-teens and teens, held in Alberta.

To learn more about Camp Liberté visit www.campliberte.ca
If you would like more information about your child attending the camp contact Camp Liberté or contact ESC by email at info@eczema-help.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.ca).



Together we are making a difference.

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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*