

Baritz Wellness Center, P.C.

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Eczema

02/20/10, 03/02/11

Eczema is an inflammatory skin reaction and is differentiated from contact dermatitis by the way it develops. Eczema starts as an itch and develops into a rash “an itch that rashes” and dermatitis is a rash that that later begins to itch “a rash that itches.” Scratching can lead to thicken skin that develops a flaky, bark-like appearance as well as infections. The skin may become shiny and ooze or it may be dry and scabby.

Eczema, also known as atopic dermatitis, is associated with a genetic predisposition to allergic bronchial asthma, food allergies and allergic rhinitis (a complex of symptoms mostly in the eyes, nose, throat and ears; which occur when you breathe in something you are allergic to). Eczema is frequently the first manifestation of atopic disease and is often thought of as a condition of early childhood, that one grows out of. However infants that that develop eczema often develop allergic rhinitis and/or asthma later in life.

Contributing Factors

Food allergies can play a major role in eczema and breast feeding is considered protective as long as the mother avoids common food allergens such as milk products, eggs, peanuts, fish, soy, wheat, citrus, and chocolate. In formula-fed infants and as a person gets older the most common offending foods are milk products, eggs and peanuts however any food can be a cause problems. Food allergies are best determined by an elimination diet and challenge.

Some eczema patients have marked improvements when they increase intake of essential fatty acids, especially EPA/DHA, thus increasing consumption of cold-water fish or taking supplements is indicated. Low zinc and vitamin E is a common finding in eczema and supplementation can help.

Digestive problems have been linked with eczema and some eczema patients have experienced reduction of itching and rashes when these are addressed. Anxiety and emotional tension aggravate itching and a calm nurturing environment seems to help most any child. Calming herbs and supplements are sometimes prescribed with benefit.

Therapeutic Considerations

1. Provide topical relief to reduce scratching and skin reactions.
2. Support immune system function and balance.
3. Assist correction of metabolic disturbances and enhance elimination by the use of detoxifying herbs.
4. Improve disordered gastric function that may occur in some eczema patients.

To have a custom program created for you or for a free consult call 508 583-2565

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References:

1. Phytotherapy Essentials, Healthy Children, Optimizing Children’s Health with Herbs by Rob Stantich & Kerry Bone. Phytotherapy Press, 2008.
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3. Herbal Reference Guide. International Foundation for Nutrition and Health, 2008
4. Medline Plus a service of the National Institute of Health. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000813.htm>

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