

Eczema - Atopic dermatitis

by Penny Keay

We have had several inquiries about eczema. It is not just in the winter that people are afflicted with this condition, it's just that it appears to get worse this time of year.

So what is eczema and what causes it? Eczema is a type of dermatitis. Dermatitis is inflammation or irritation of the skin. Eczema can appear in two main forms. The dry form where the skin cracks and flakes or a weepy kind where blisters form, then continue to ooze. The cause can be from many things but often the underlying cause is due to an allergy to something. Something you came in contact with or something you ate or inhaled. Most often it is diet related and can be hereditary.

Most common sites for eczema to start are on the face, in the bends of the elbows and behind the knees, although it can be found on any part of the body. It can be extremely itchy, red, raw, weepy or dry, crusty and flaky. It can be any of the above. Often it will start as small blisters that quickly will break, ooze then become crusty and flaky. The area affected can be as little as a small coin shaped circle or cover a large portion of your body.

Many of you that have known Al and me for a while know that he has eczema also. He had suffered for years with it appearing just in the winter months and of all places on his eyelids. Then several years ago he had a major outbreak and it covered nearly his entire body. Surprisingly it was from his neck down. He was miserable. It was extremely itchy and he was getting to the point where he was unable to sleep at night and was causing self-mutilation of his legs while sleeping (yes he scratched until he bled). The doctor put him on a course of steroids and on cortisone cream. It got worse!!

One afternoon he was eating some nuts and cheese and within an hour or so noticed he was very itchy. He put two and two together and discovered he must have an allergy to something he was eating. So he called the doctor again and explained that it was getting worse, not better and he thought it was food related. She recommended allergy testing for food allergies. So, we took the plunge and even though our health insurance wouldn't cover the cost of the tests the \$500.00 we spent was well worth it.

He was allergic to Corn! And about a dozen more foods at varying levels. Corn was and is still the worst offender. He must avoid all corn and corn by products or else he develops blisters between his fingers, behind his knees and on his eyelids!

The doctor explained that in allergies of this type that cause eczema the allergen is actually causing the skin to boil from within – hence the blisters, they break open to let the toxin out but in so doing have caused skin damage. The skin in a flare up may feel hot or warm to the touch. This in turn may cause it to itch.

The skin will attempt to heal but because the offending food may still be being ingested or the substance exposed to may still be present the skin has a very hard time to heal partly because you may be itching it or the blisters keep forming, breaking and oozing in the underlying skin layers.

This is where essential oils and aromatherapy might help. If you can keep a barrier by applying lotions and creams that have essential oils and other carrier oils between your skin and the outdoor elements you should be able to shorten the length of time it takes for your skin to heal. Also the faster you can get it to heal the less likely you are of developing secondary infections from bacterial or fungus. Several essential oils are known to help relieve itching.

Some of the best essential oils for eczema are [Rose Otto](#), [Lavender](#), [Roman Chamomile](#), [German Chamomile](#), [Neroli](#), [Helichrysum](#), [Bergamot](#) and the carrier oils [Jojoba](#) or [Rosehip seed oil](#). You may even want to try [Tamanu oil](#) it is extremely helpful for those with a variety of skin ailments including eczema and should be used and/or mixed in small amounts in any lotion or cream used for your skin. It is strong, sweet smelling oil and only a small amount is needed.

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Other essential oils that may help are [Geranium](#), [Hyssop](#), [Juniper berry](#), [Melissa](#), [Carrotseed](#), [Cedarwood](#), [Niaouli](#), [Rosemary](#), [Rosewood](#), [Tea Tree](#), [Clary Sage](#), [Patchouli](#), [Ylang Ylang](#) and [Sandalwood](#).

Many of the essential oils listed can help with stress which can also be a triggering factor in eczema. Removing stress in your life can help along with getting plenty of fresh water and rest.

Al found a special blend that I made up for him worked wonders. It helped keep the skin softened so it did not seem to crack as easily. It provides essential oils that helped the skin to heal fast and prevent infections. To buy this blend please visit our websites Scented Products page [Click here now](#).

Another helpful blend would be to use our [Sorbolene Cream](#), to that add some [Jojoba](#) or [Rosehip seed oil](#) and a few drops of [Roman Chamomile](#).

Our recommendation to anyone suffering from eczema, especially if it is long term is to see your doctor first. If you suspect you have food or other allergies you may want to inquire about testing (for Al it was simply drawing a few tubes of blood that were sent off to a special testing lab).

Remember prevention is still the best medicine. If you find out you are allergic to some food you are eating it's much easier to avoid that food than to deal with the eczema.

Al also found that since the eczema always was worse in the winter time, we discovered that as soon as he got more sunshine on his skin it would disappear.

For Al and many other eczema sufferers it is known that they may need more sunshine to help their body with the photo-chemical reactions he needs to make certain hormones and vitamins to keep his skin healthy. Note: there are a few individuals that have the opposite reaction to the sun and must avoid it. These folks a few and far between but thought I should mention it here too.

So in the winter months he gets 10 minutes of UV lights and Infrared lights every other day. (We have our own lighting setup in our home.) This has all but eliminated his eczema unless of course, he gets into some corn-by-product by accident (happens sometimes when we eat out and aren't sure what might be in the food ingredient lists).

He uses my cream [Cream de La Creme](#) all winter long too as his skin does have a tendency to dry out more than mine. We hope this information has been helpful and you can find some relief for your eczema too.

Cool Compress for Eczema

[Roman Chamomile](#) – 3 drops

[Lavender](#) - 3 drops

[Rose Otto](#)– 1 drop

[Neroli](#) – 1 drop

Mix all essential oils together. Then add 1-3 drops in a small basin of water. If the body part affected is a small area, submerge in water. If not, use a soft cloth, wet it, wring it out and apply to the area. Since eczema affected skin is often very warm to the touch this should give some relief.

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