

# A bit about Eczema and Urticaria

In our family I'm the Eczema and Urticaria sufferer, happily Molly only gets a bit of eczema that reacts when she's touched something or used a product that she's allergic to. We're not sure exactly what sets her off but we know glue (face paints) and some cosmetics (welcome to the teenage years!) are an issue. For me it's more chronic and ongoing. My skin is a big issue as I'm constantly itchy and uncomfortable. The cause of the worst reaction has been tracked down via patch testing to Tocopheryl Acetate, or synthetic vitamin E. The irony that something put in skin care products to soften skin is causing urticaria is not lost on me. I've had to find new deodorant, sun block, moisturisers, shampoo and even some of the skin supplement I've been taken use it in the casing for the herbs. I'm still constantly uncomfortable, but at least not popping prednisone like it's going out of style. This is a work in progress for me.

## Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis)

Eczema is an inflammation of the skin that causes changes in the upper layer of the skin. The result is redness, intense itching and in more severe cases cracking, crusting and oozing. Basically the skin doesn't function as well as it should and allergy inducing substances can get through the barrier and cause dryness and inflammation. One of the most frustrating things about Eczema is sorting out the triggers. So while food allergy doesn't cause eczema, eating certain foods can help trigger it. This differentiation is, no doubt, the cause of many frustrating exchanges between patients and doctors. At the end of the day, if you are prone to eczema then a big part of your job is to find out what triggers it, options include: Dust Soap and detergent Heat Cleaning products Latex Animal dander Food – dairy, wheat and soya

## How to help yourself

Apart from figuring out what triggers your eczema, ensuring you and your skin are hydrated is your next priority. So...in brief- Drink loads of water. I just keep sipping a bottle of water throughout the day. When I don't, when I'm busy running around at work and don't think about my water intake then my skin

sufferers.

## Moisturising

This is key – your GP will be able to prescribe moisturisers for you. There are lots out there and do keep going back to your GP to try new ones if you're not getting a good result with the one you have. I've bobbed between moisturisers as I swear my skin 'get use to' them and they seem to stop working so well. For me, I need to moisturise three times a day. Minimum. If I can squeeze in four full body slatherings a day then that's better. And yes...this means spending time in the toilets de-robing and moisturising in a cubical. It's not fun but it needs doing.

## Emollients

Instead of soap you need to be using an emollient. These are heavy creams that you use instead of soap. Take a small amount and gently rub it on your skin before a bath or shower. There are a wide variety available and again your GP can advise you. Personally, I use Epaderm every day.

## Finally

Do keep going back to your GP for help. Everyone is different, and also your skin changes over time. If you are itchy and uncomfortable don't just suffer in silence, try different moisturisers and get a dermatologist appointment to see if they can help identify the causes. I found that the dermatologist was prepared to prescribe stronger steroid cream which got reactions under control much faster, meaning I used it for a much shorter period of time.