

Secrets To Curing Eczema Naturally:



What Your Doctor Won't Tell You

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Introduction: The Nightmare Called Eczema

Oops! You feel it. You instinctively scratch it. Regardless of how close you scrutinize your itchy skin, though, you can't see it. Not yet. But you know it's coming – soon.

What's going on here? Welcome to an outbreak of eczema. Technically, your health care professional may call it atopic dermatitis, which actually means the same thing. Eczema is only one member of a family of skin disorders that falls under the umbrella of atopic dermatitis. The others include: contact dermatitis, dyshidrotic eczema, nummular eczema and seborrheic eczema.

If you don't suffer from any of these disorders, you may wonder how a mere rash can be considered to be such a nightmare. But to those who deal with this itchy, painful and often unsightly skin disorder, they would agree that nightmare is an accurate description.

The hurdles and obstacles of dealing with eczema, whatever its type, are numerous. They range from skin damage, to developing other related medical ailments, to feelings of social embarrassment.

While you may feel as if you stand out in a crowd, you may be surprised to learn that eczema is not that uncommon. It is estimated that 20 percent of infants are affected by it. Thankfully, many of these children grow out of it by the age of ten. Those that don't usually do so in adulthood.

Eczema is not a disorder that only affects infants. Nearly three percent of the adult and children populations in the United States have some form of it.

You may ask yourself, "Why am I one of that three percent?"

I certainly can't answer that. But I can provide you with some natural remedies to not only help you clear up this round of flare-ups, but to also minimize the next round so that it is barely noticeable.

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The best part? This can be done without the use of harsh and often dangerous prescription drugs.

Conquering Eczema Once and For All

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At first, I was hesitant to tell anyone—even my closest friends – how I finally conquered my severe case of eczema. After all, I didn't do it the way "society" told me I needed to; the only way according to "conventional" medicine.

No, I decided to search out the rumors . . . the small voices . . . the muffled suggestions . . . that people had previously hinted at. But every time I mentioned some natural remedy to my doctor, he told me not to believe everything I heard.

Besides, he continued, there were no clinical studies done on many of those remedies. The natural remedies couldn't possibly be more powerful, more helpful, more healing than conventional man-made ammunition against atopic dermatitis.

At first, I politely obeyed. He was the one with the medical degree, wasn't he? But the more I thought about it, the more it bothered me. He may have been a doctor, but I was the one who was suffering from the ravages of eczema. I suffered from the itching, the complications, and the social discomfort that very often struck me at all the wrong times.

But as I embarked on a successful course of natural remedies, I began to feel braver about telling people about how I overcame the chronic condition of eczema. Soon, people were coming up to me to ask for help.

Before I knew it, those who had benefited from my advice convinced me to write my system down. It was meant to be shared, they said.

And on that note, this book, *Curing Eczema Naturally: What Your Doctor Won't Tell You* was born. And since I first introduced it, this amazingly simple system has helped untold individuals to not only cope with eczema, but in many cases even defeat the stubborn rash, the intense itching and the demeaning humiliation.

Are you ready to change your life? Isn't it time that you reduced your risk of other more serious skin disorders? Wouldn't you love to be rid of the pain and itching without the use of harsh, potentially dangerous and damaging creams and medications?

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If you answered a resounding yes, then this book was written especially for you. Discover how taking simple herbs and making easy changes to your diet- as well as a few effortless lifestyle changes- can transform your life for the better.

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With a clear explanation of what eczema is as our starting point, I'll then provide you with an assortment of easy-to-make recipes that will to help heal your body from the inside out; this book is the ultimate guide.

Are you ready to unlock the natural secrets to curing eczema that your doctor won't tell you about? Welcome to your new life!

What Your Doctor Won't Tell You

Chapter 1: What Eczema Is And How To Recognize It

Talk about a skin disease that can make your life a living hell. No, you won't die of it, but its appearance does create a vicious circle. Your skin begins to itch, so you naturally scratch it...

The more it itches, the more you scratch. By the time you notice a rash, it's probably too late. You've probably irritated the skin – or you're well on your way to it – and an inflammation, in the form of blotchy redness, appears. Unfortunately, the noticeable swelling isn't far behind.

That pretty well sums up the major symptoms of eczema, an all-too-common chronic skin disease. But then if you already suffer from it, you're all too familiar with just how this insidious disorder can affect your life.

Eczema is caused by an allergy-like reaction within the skin, called a **hypersensitivity reaction**. This reaction triggers what eventually becomes a chronic swelling as well as redness – a typical sign of inflammation. Sometimes individuals affected with it can lack certain proteins, which results in an even more heightened sensitivity.

If you have eczema, you may also suffer from seasonal allergies right along with it. Or it may be that you have a family history of asthma or hay fever. No, you don't have to be affected personally with either of these conditions. If someone in your family is afflicted, however, then your risk for developing eczema rises considerably.

What Makes Eczema Worse?

While the medical community believes there's a correlation between these common diseases and eczema, no one is really sure of the ultimate cause of the problem. One thing they do know, though, is that the presence of hay fever and/or asthma inflame an already irritating and in many ways painful

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condition. Other health conditions which may also exacerbate your eczema include:

- Being too cold
- Being too hot
- The common cold virus
- Contact with chemicals or other irritants
- Fragrances or dyes added to skin lotions, creams or soaps
- Overexposure to water (taking too many showers or staying too long in a swimming pool)
- Sudden changes in temperature
- Fragrances or dyes added to skin lotions, creams or to soap

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The Telltale Signs

How can you tell if what you have is just dry skin or if it's a true case of eczema? Oh, trust me; you'll be able to tell. In fact, after several flare-ups you'll be able to tell without even checking the list below. You'll also be able to immediately detect it on others, once you see any of these signs:

- Blisters anywhere on your body – especially if they're oozing and crusting
- Dry skin on all areas of your body
- Areas of "bumpy" skin, especially on the back of your arms and the front of your thighs
- Discharge or bleeding from the ear(s)
- Areas of thickened or leather-like skin. These areas are called lichenification. They occur as a result of continual scratching and the resulting irritation.
- Changes in skin color
- Raw skin due to excessive scratching

Meet The Family

Eczema is just one of several members of the family of skin disorders known as **atopic dermatitis**. Also in this family of skin disorders is **contact dermatitis**. Similar to eczema in that it's a rash, contact dermatitis is caused by an irritant or allergic reaction to an object which touches your skin.

While not contagious, contact dermatitis is, nonetheless, quite uncomfortable. You may discover that an acute case – one which emerges and vanishes rather quickly -- is triggered by any number of products,

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When to Call Your Health-Care Provider

It's frustrating, indeed. You're sure it's eczema. You would rather treat it yourself naturally if you can. But how can you be sure this rash doesn't need medical attention? Below are symptoms that indicate if your eczema requires more care than you can give it:

If you have a rash that you can't explain *and* have a history of asthma in your family (even if you personally don't have it.)

If you've treated the rash for a week without it healing. You may need to take a more aggressive approach.

If you have blisters that are yellow or brown crusted, or pus-filled blisters on top of the eczema. This may be an indication of a bacterial infection that needs to be treated with antibiotics.

If, during a flare-up, you've been exposed to an individual with a viral skin disease, like a cold sore, genital warts or genital herpes. This contact increases your risk of acquiring the viral infection.

If you notice small blisters filled with pus. This may be an indication of eczema herpeticum. It's a rare, but serious complication caused by the herpes simplex II virus.

including soaps, perfumes, fragrances added to any products, various types of cosmetics and in some cases even jewelry. Any rash caused by poison ivy or poison oak also falls under the umbrella of contact dermatitis.

Dyshidrotic eczema? Never heard of it? It's often called **dyhidrosis** or **pompholyx**. This member of the atopic dermatitis family doesn't form a rash. Instead, you develop watery blisters – intensely itchy ones – usually on the palms of your hands or the bottoms of your feet, or both.

These blisters last approximately three weeks before drying, leaving cracks and fissures on your skin. If you've ever experienced these, they can be painful.

Nummular Eczema

This disease is puzzling, even to the medical community. It's also known as **nummular eczematous dermatitis** or **discoid eczema**. The description of discoid in this variety of eczema refers to its coin-like shape. It first surfaces as a group of small blister-like lesions and red spots, called papules. These spots, like the other varieties in this group, are itchy. At times, you may also feel a burning sensation as the blister form.

Eventually, they grow larger, forming reddened coin-shaped

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lesions, which resemble ringworm. If you've ever had the acute version, then you already know that the lesions may "weep", or leak a fluid that then forms a crust on the skin. If the condition is chronic, the skin in this area turns scaly.

What Is Seborrheic Dermatitis?

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Commonly known as dandruff, **Seborrhic dermatitis** is the technical name for the very common skin problem affecting your scalp. It causes scaly, red skin that's oily, often producing thicker clumps of oil on the scalp. If your newborn has cradle cap, he or she is experiencing seborrhic dermatitis.

Surprisingly, seborrheic dermatitis doesn't only affect the scalp. It can also appear on any part of your body that has an abundance of oil glands, such as your face, upper chest or back.

Symptoms Of Seborrheic Dermatitis

How can you tell if you have it? Here's a quick list of the most common symptoms:

- Inflamed or red skin
- Thick crusts on your scalp
- Patchy scaling on your scalp
- Oily skin covered in scales (armpits, chest, and/or groin)
- Dandruff (white flakes) on your scalp, eyebrows or facial hair.
- Itching or soreness

When You Visit Your Doctor

If you have chronic, stubborn eczema, it's not unusual that you'll more than likely visit your personal health care provider at least once for it; a consultation is practically a given. When you do decide you either need a diagnosis or some form of treatment, you'll get more from your visit if you are adequately prepared.

Not only should you know what to expect, but you should have some information readily available for your health care provider as well.

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You can begin by writing down your symptoms. Yes, this may seem a little redundant, since you obviously already know them.

But when you feel as if you're under time restraints during your visit as we often do in clinical situations, you'd be surprised at some of the most important information you forget to offer to your doctor in the moment.

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Include in your list any factors which seem to trigger a flare-up, as well as any that further aggravate your symptoms. Is there a certain brand of soap that seems to make the condition worse? Is the disorder worse when you're around cigarette smoke? Anything that you've noticed about its severity will certainly help.

The more information that your health care professional gains from you, the more accurate a diagnosis s/he can make. It also helps in determining the most effective treatment plan possible for your condition.

Make A List of Medications

Make a list of all medications you're currently taking; list prescription as well as over the counter medicines. Include in this listing the precise dosage of each. Also be sure to note any vitamins, herbs, or other dietary supplements that you're taking. While these medicines may not be contributing to the eczema, knowing what you are taking will ensure that if you're prescribed any medication by your doctor, you won't experience any unforeseen side effects due to incompatible drug interactions.

Be aware that your health care provider will undoubtedly ask you some questions. While you can't tell for sure what she'll ask, you can have an idea of some of the basics. Before you enter the office, you may want to consider some of the possible questions she may ask so that you can begin thinking about some of the answers.

- When did you first notice the symptoms?
- How often do they occur?
- Do they appear occasionally or are they continuous?
- Does anything alleviate the symptoms -- even slightly?
- Have you noticed anything that makes your condition worse?
- Do you have a family history of asthma or allergies -- even though you may have neither condition?
- What skin care products do you use?

Finally, write a list of all the questions that you may have for your doctor. You might think that you won't forget to ask anything while at your visit, but

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inevitably even those of us with the best memories and the best intent sometimes forget.

You may also want to go a step further than this; consider taking a trusted friend or family member with you- someone who can ask any questions you may have forgotten in the moment. This person may also think of some questions to ask that even you hadn't considered.

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“Doctor, I Have a Few Questions . . . “

If you're not sure where to start in questioning your doctor, here are some of the most common ones. As you read through these, you'll undoubtedly think of some that more specifically target your individual case of eczema.

- What are the possible causes of my symptoms?
- Will I need to undergo any testing to confirm my diagnosis?
- Is this a temporary or an acute condition? Is it chronic?
- What do you recommend as treatment?
- Is it possible for the condition to clear up without any treatment?
- Are there any effective alternative treatments I could take?
- What are the skin care regimens I should be using for the eczema?

As of today, there is no definitive single test that diagnoses eczema. The best the medical community can offer is a diagnosis based on a visual examination of your skin, as well as a review of your family history.

Once you and your health care provider have correctly identified this skin disorder, you also need to become aware of all the possible complications that may arise from it. The next chapter is dedicated to letting you know what problems can develop if your initial condition isn't handled properly.

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Chapter 2: Complications of Eczema

It's tough enough dealing with eczema itself. But, nature can add insult to injury – or rather, adds further injury to injury – with the possible development of complications from your eczema.

Some of these complications can be quite serious. While some are physical, there can also be psychological implications as well. The cracked, dry skin that is common to eczema increases your risk of acquiring various skin infections. The risk is substantially increased if you scratch the affected area continuously, or if you're not treating the disorder properly.

A serious concern for eczema sufferers like yourself is developing a bacterial infection, which can play havoc with your already delicate condition. While there are numerous kinds of bacterial problems that you may develop, some are definitely worse than others.

Topping the list is one called **Staphylococcus aureus**. How can you tell if you're infected with it? The symptoms include an increased appearance of redness of your skin, the oozing of already cracked skin, as well as crusting over the area when the liquid dries. Additionally, you may also experience a temperature, and overall feelings of bodily discomfort.

Don't assume that your body can combat this infection effectively and heal itself; it can't. You need to consult your health care provider and take a course of prescription antibiotics.

Coming To You Via The Herpes Simplex Virus

Oh yes! It's a distinct possibility. You may, indeed, develop an infection caused by the herpes simplex virus; this is the same virus that causes cold sores. While it seems harmless enough, it too can progress into a serious condition called **eczema herpeticum**.

If you have painful eczema that only seems to be getting worse, or you experience blisters filled with fluid, then you may have this type of virus. The blisters will eventually rupture, resulting in open sores. You may also run a fever and feel generally unwell.

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Exfoliate Dermatitis

It's rare, but it happens. I'm talking about **exfoliate dermatitis**, which is a potentially life-threatening condition. With this disorder, lesions cover just about every part of your body.

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What are some of the symptoms? If you have oozing or crusting lesions, itching, scaling skin and generalized skin redness with fever, then you may have developed this eczema complication. A considerable danger from exfoliate dermatitis is becoming dehydrated from the loss of body fluid through the oozing of the lesions.

If this disorder affected only your skin, that would be bad enough. It also has the potential to spread toxins to other areas of your body – even your major organs. That is literally a life-endangering possibility!

Exfoliate dermatitis is not something that you should attempt to treat on your own. You need to seek medical treatment as soon as possible; the sooner you consult a health care professional, the smaller the possibility of the situation becoming a life-threatening condition. In some cases, you may need to be hospitalized. Yes! It's that serious!

Treating Hand Dermatitis

You probably have experienced **hand dermatitis** at least once, but never even knew it had a name. It starts innocently enough – with dry skin. As the disorder worsens, however, it produces scaly, red patches on your hands that may also become inflamed.

If you've ever experienced it, then you know how annoying hand dermatitis can be. You also know that it worsens considerably during the winter. Because you are already afflicted with eczema, you are also more vulnerable to developing this skin condition.

You also probably know that regular exposure to water can aggravate it. This is especially true if you're also using any kind of detergents or disinfectants. For example: washing dishes by hand can aggravate this condition. (Does that mean you can claim the purchase of a dishwasher as a medical expense?)

The best way to alleviate your symptoms is through conscious avoidance of excessive exposure to water, detergents and disinfectants. In addition, you should apply prescription moisturizing creams and other topical medications.

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Among the topical creams that your dermatologist may recommend are **corticosteroids**. There are many different types available, varying in strengths. Your doctor can prescribe the proper type for your exact condition.

As with any corticosteroid, you must be precise in its use; be sure to follow your doctor's recommendations. In a later chapter, we talk about some of the more dangerous side effects of using this class of drug.

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Eye Complaints

Eye problems from eczema; who knew? It is, indeed, true, and it's actually more common than you may think. If you experience itching on your eyelid along with your eczema, then you may have an eye-related complaint.

As you can imagine, an itchy eyelid is anything but pleasant- in fact, it can be nearly unbearable. If the itchiness were the only symptom, then that would be bad enough. Just when you think it can't get any worse, it does, because any complication that affects the eye can cause a permanent loss of vision.

You'll know – at least have an inkling – when you experience eye problems. Your eyelids and their linings will be inflamed. If this sounds familiar to you, it should; these are the symptoms of conjunctivitis. You'll also be plagued with eyes that itch, burn, and water. They may also give off a mucous discharge.

If you notice what many refer to as a cobblestone pattern under your eyes, you're probably experiencing complications from eczema. Another symptom is a misshaping of the cornea. Many experts believe this happens due to the frequent eye scratching and rubbing, done to alleviate the discomfort.

Think you're experiencing any of these symptoms? Consult your dermatologist immediately; these are complications that are beyond home treatment. You must seek professional medical attention – immediately.

In addition to the above mentioned eye issues, the use of some corticosteroids for an extended length of time may also trigger eye disorders. We talk about these in more detail in a later chapter.

It Gets Complicated . . .

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The Social Affects of Eczema

We've talked a lot about the clinical aspects of eczema- why it happens, how to avoid it, medical questions to ask concerning it... but that's not all that you deal with when you have eczema. What about the potentially devastating social aspect of this very visible disease?

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At the best of times, it's a little awkward. At the worst, it can be cripplingly embarrassing. And it's not just the fact that it's *there*, and chances are you're going to always be aware of it. It's the looks, the questions, the well-meaning but generally insulting advice that someone who has had dry skin once or twice in the winter will try and give you.

Most people mean well, and very few of them actually intend to be insensitive. Most of the time, if someone doesn't understand something, they try to put it in a perspective they do understand. Casually dry skin, awkward jokes, stares to try and determine what you are dealing with... it can be very frustrating for someone who has the condition, and is tedious to have to face on a regular basis.

How to Deal With Questions

Most adults aren't going to openly question what's going on with your skin, unless they're particularly blunt in their mannerisms. But kids ask questions like that all the time – and if you're at a casual level with a person, or even pursuing a relationship, chances are a question or two is going to come up.

There's nothing wrong with these questions, even if they make you feel a little awkward or different. It's easy to feel singled out or uncomfortable about yourself, but the person isn't asking to make you feel that way – most times they're inquiring about your life, or simply trying to determine what you're currently experiencing.

I've found the best way to deal with the situation is to, without becoming defensive, merely explain what eczema is. "Oh, I have eczema. It's a skin condition. It's sort of like having extremely dry skin, but all the time", is all you usually have to say. If someone inquires further, it's simply because they're interested in it. I usually find that most people know someone else with eczema, even if it is a mild form.

How to Deal With Stares

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Maybe you're at a party, and a friend-of-a-friend just cannot seem to stop staring at a spot on your arm, or leg – it can be incredibly awkward once you've noticed it- and even worse if they continue to stare after a few seconds.

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A simple response of, "Oh, yeah. Are you looking at this? I have eczema, it's a skin condition" is a great way to handle the situation. Getting defensive is so easy to do, especially when you're already self-conscious about it, but it's just going to make the situation worse.

A casual mention is going to make *them* feel awkward for so obviously staring, and it proves to not just that person, but the group at large, that you're okay with it. And you absolutely should be- which leads right into the next section...

Your Self Esteem Should Not Be Tied to Your Eczema

This is so sad, but it's the biggest issue I've found with people who suffer from eczema, even in its mildest form. Their self esteem is inevitably tied to their skin condition. If it's a "good skin" week, they feel great about themselves – but if it's a "bad skin" week, their self esteem plummets.

It's so easy to fall into this trap, too, because we as a society put so much emphasis on perfect skin as a sign of 'beauty'. Your self esteem needs to be based on so much more than just your skin; you CAN be beautiful in the middle of a flare up, and you should give yourself permission to feel that way, too.

But jeez, how can I fix this?

A lot of times, if your self image is tied to your skin, it's because you've linked the two in your mind since you've begun suffering from eczema (sometimes your entire life). It's not easy to correct this faulty sort of thinking, but you're going to be so much happier if you do.

A good first step is to look deeply at what you're feeling about yourself, and why you feel this way. Do you think that jacket looks terrible because the sleeves are rolled up, showing more skin, or because it's a terrible cut and does nothing for you? Are you not going out because you genuinely don't enjoy that group of people, or is it because you feel too self-conscious to be seen outside of your home?

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Identify what you're thinking, and why. Consider how you talk to yourself, and what you're thinking in terms of your view of yourself. Are you using negative words, or positive thoughts?

Once you've done a thorough self-assessment, take a step to change any negative thought patterns. Every time you catch yourself thinking something derogatory, put a positive perspective on it. An initial thought of: "I can't go out tonight, I look terrible and my skin is just horrible," can be transformed into: "I'm in the middle of a flare-up, but if I can just get myself over that, I know I'm going to have a good time".

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It can be hard to adjust your thoughts appropriately at first, but everyone deserves to be happy. Your eczema does not mean that you are trapped, an inferior person, or that you don't deserve to live your life just like anyone else. We all have something that makes us self conscious about ourselves – once you realize that, it becomes a lot easier to accept your own little quirk.

Accept Your Little Flaw

Eczema is absolutely treatable. There will always be, however, a chance of a flare up, a bad day, a stressful situation, or an awkward comment that will be made about your skin. As someone who suffers from eczema, you have probably put more thought into your skin than anyone else.

Simply accepting that your skin isn't going to always be perfect is a really important step in accepting and loving yourself as a whole being. There's nothing wrong with the way you are, and your skin condition just makes you more uniquely *you*. Once you've gotten the worst of your symptoms under control – with the help of this book, obviously – you're going to feel much better!

Eczema and Relationships

You're having a bad day. Your significant other tries to hug, touch, or kiss you – and you pull away, because you're feeling uncomfortable about your unsightly skin. Or the flip side: your significant other is hesitant to touch you because he or she doesn't know how to deal with your skin condition and doesn't want to make you uncomfortable, or worse, hurt you.

This can lead to resentment and anger, and when enough of those feelings build up without being dealt with, the situation can blow up. Big time.

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So what to do? How do you deal with something like this, without damaging your relationship or hiding under the proverbial rock and avoiding all relationships?

Communication

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I cannot stress enough the importance of straightforward communication. So many relationships are hurt or ruined due to the lack of communication between two people that are together. If you avoid open discussion about a significant condition like your eczema, then the relationship might just get worse.

Talk to your significant other: about how you feel, what you're thinking, about your skin condition and how you both can deal with it. Sometimes you're just not going to want to cuddle or touch, because your skin is itchy and uncomfortable; all you want to do is lie down between comfortable cotton sheets and hope it goes away. But if you don't tell your significant other these thoughts, they're going to think there is something wrong with them, not you – and might end up feeling angry and rejected.

Tell your significant other how you're feeling, if their touch occasionally bothers your delicate skin, or if you like the feeling of closeness because it makes you feel less uncomfortable. All of this needs to be discussed, because if you're reading this, right now, then your eczema is an important enough issue for you to share openly with your loved ones.

It Will Make Some People Uncomfortable

It's your skin, so you're used to it- the pain, the cracks, the flaking. It's all something you've likely dealt with for a while, and if it's not... well, it's awkward, but you're stuck with it. Very soon, it's just *there*.

But for your significant other, chances are they haven't had the same condition or symptoms as you. Eczema might make some people feel uncomfortable, or even a little wary. Talk about it, and give your partner time to get used to it a little more. Your skin condition is something that you've dealt with on a daily basis, and are now, over time, accustomed to. The same amount of time should be given to another person, too.

Don't let your self-esteem be negatively affected if someone you've just started seeing is uncomfortable concerning your skin issue. Their state of mind is not a problem with you, remember, but a problem with them – they're the ones who need to adjust their thinking.

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Just give the other person time, and see what happens. Sometimes it's a hard barrier to get past, but it's nothing that can't be overcome.

Just Be Happy – And Yourself

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Sure, eczema can be terrible at times. You can feel embarrassed and awkward and some days, you might just feel so miserable that all you want to do is curl up in bed and never leave. But eczema doesn't define you; you are your own person with many qualities far beyond your skin.

Don't let a silly skin disorder control you, because your life is composed of so much more than just your eczema. Even if you're having a skin break-out... just be yourself. Don't limit your perception of yourself to this disorder.

Conventional, allopathic medicine can offer you some powerful answers to gaining control over your eczema. Some of these methods, however, come with some powerful and harsh side effects. If you've never been treated for your eczema before, turn to the next chapter to see what you can expect to be told and prescribed.

What Your Doctor Won't Tell You

Chapter 3: Conventional Medicine's Answers to Eczema

You may already know what I'm about to say: the cause of eczema isn't really clear. That means that it's impossible to actually "cure" it through conventional medicine. The best that allopathic medicine can do is to alleviate the symptoms.

Your doctor may prescribe medication - in milder cases - or suggest over-the-counter drugs that are aimed at reducing the inflammation and relieving the itching, as well as lowering the risk of future flare-ups.

Because eczema is often related to allergies, you may mistakenly assume that taking allergy shots or being treated for them in some way would help to improve your skin condition. Sorry, but for some reason - which isn't exactly known yet - it doesn't.

So where exactly does your health care provider start in your treatment? Your physician may start with prescribing **corticosteroids creams or ointments**.

Not All Corticosteroids Are Created Equal

Approaches to treating eczema using this class of medication are not created equally; and that's a good thing for you. If you have mild to moderate eczema, don't expect a prescription strength cream that someone with a more severe form of the disorder may receive.

In fact, don't be surprised if you don't get a prescription at all. This type of medication is typically available over-the-counter without the need of a prescription. It's a lower dosage of steroid than a doctor would need to provide in prescription form. Because of this, you may be tempted to self-medicate by purchasing random over-the-counter creams.

Don't do this without informing your health care provider of your intentions. Get her opinion before you use any of these. At best, she can steer you toward the most appropriate choice(s) available. Or she may say that none would be is effective enough in your particular case.

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Beware Of Corticosteroids

We already talked about corticosteroids in the form of creams and ointments. But if your condition warrants it - that is, if it is severe enough - your doctor may place you on either **oral corticosteroids** or even **injections** of these drugs. The goal of these medications is to reduce the inflammation associated with eczema and to alleviate the symptoms.

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While you'll probably greatly benefit from these medicines, you likely won't be kept on them for very long; they are only short-term solutions. They can produce some serious unwanted, adverse side effects, such as: increased risk of cataracts, osteoporosis, muscle weakness and vulnerability to increased blood pressure.

Oral corticosteroids should be taken while you're eating or immediately following a meal to lessen the chances of stomach upset. There's an even greater health risk, however, occasionally associated with oral corticosteroids- insulin resistance, as well as a greater risk of diabetes, has been associated with long-term use of these medications.

There's another class of medications, called **immunomodulators**, which may also help you. This class is a relatively new treatment option and is preferred by many because it's steroid free. The immunomodulator, which is applied topically, actually revises your immune system, encouraging it to reduce your skin's inflammation and redness. The brand names of some of these are Protopic and Elidel.

This medication shouldn't be administered to any child younger than two years old. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends this class of medication be prescribed when all the other options have failed. They may have possible adverse side effects on the immune system.

Your physician may also prescribe an antibiotic if you have a bacterial skin infection or an open sore/fissure due to excessive scratching. The length of time you are required to take these may vary. It could be a short-term remedy to treat the acute infection. You may, however, be prescribed them for a longer period in order to reduce the amount of bacteria on your skin and to prevent a recurrence of infections.

Specifically, What Are The Potential Side Effects?

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Adverse side effects are typically inevitable with strong medications. They don't come as a surprise to the medical community, even if your dermatologist or other health—care provider initially forgets to tell you about them.

The medical literature on corticosteroids has been recorded for nearly half a century. Some of these side effects are mild and merely irritating or annoying. Others, however, are more severe- much more so. In fact, the effects may be life-altering or even life-threatening.

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Your risk of developing side effects depends on a variety of factors, in addition to the length of time you use the medication. You may be more at risk for developing adverse side effects if you take oral corticosteroids or apply them to the skin (it also depends where on your body you must apply your cream). The risk and extent of your potential side effects also depend on your age and the state of your overall health.

What Kind Of Side Effects Could I Expect?

Hopefully, you don't "expect" any. But there are some ill effects that others have experienced. If you notice any of these, alert your health-care provider. Together you'll be able to detect whether your additional health concerns are caused by corticosteroid use.

Some individuals have developed eye cataracts while using this treatment. As you well know, a cataract is a condition in which your vision becomes cloudy. This may occur if your corticosteroids are a strong dosage or if you've used this cream for an extended length of time around your eyes.

Similarly, glaucoma- an increase of pressure in the eye- can result if this medication is applied around the eyes, given orally, or injected. Not surprisingly, if you're already at a high risk for glaucoma, this medication puts you at even a higher risk.

Nausea, vomiting, or other gastrointestinal problems may occur if you're taking this medication by mouth. You can reduce your chances of these issues by taking your medication with food. You may be at additional risk if you have had a peptic ulcer in the past, or you smoke or use alcohol.

High blood pressure is also one of the more common side effects. This is especially true if you already suffer from hypertension, or if you have been on corticosteroids for a considerable length of time.

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A loss of bone density, referred to as osteoporosis, may also occur. This side effect more often affects women who have been on Predisone therapy for quite a long time.

Ready for some insult to be added to your injury? One of the possible side effects of corticosteroid treatment may include a variety of skin effects – including spider veins and stretch marks. You may experience these if you're taking an oral or injectible form of this drug. You may also develop these skin issues if you use the cream for an extended amount of time.

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If you've been on any form of this drug for a while, you may have noticed skin irritation and even rashes that are not related to your eczema. Yep! It's another possible side effect of your treatment. Ironic, isn't it? You may also be aware that your skin may begin to thin and your blood vessels may dilate.

"Acne? At my age?", you ask. How can this be? Unfortunately, acne can be another side effect of this type of medication. It is quite possible that your mouth acne is merely a side effect of your corticosteroid usage.

Have you ever felt like your corticosteroid medication isn't giving you the same relief it once did? No, it isn't just your imagination; it very well could happen. In medical circles, this condition is referred to as tachyphylaxis. It's quite common, unfortunately, in individuals who use this type of medication for a while.

Feelin' Like You're Gaining Weight?

If you feel as though you've gained a few pounds, weight gain is not an uncommon side effect. You may notice this side effect within only a month after starting your treatment. This occurs for two reasons: the use of corticosteroids increases your appetite as well as causes fluid retention.

Another form of treatment that you may receive is an **oral antihistamine**. There are plenty of different ones available. Perhaps the best known name-brand of these is Benadryl. These medications, however, often cause drowsiness. It may be best to take these just before you retire for the evening.

You've probably used antihistamines before you developed eczema or possibly for conditions other than the skin disorder. They are extremely common for most mild allergic symptoms.

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What you may not know about antihistamines is why they're called what they're called. This type of medication blocks an allergic substance called a histamine (sounds logical now, doesn't it?). Your doctor may prescribe an antihistamine on the theory that your body is overproducing histamines.

Because of the seemingly ubiquitous nature of antihistamines, you may have overlooked their potential side effects. Every cell in your body contains histamines. The highest concentration of them, though, is located in the gastrointestinal tract, the lungs, and the skin. Histamine's functions are many and essential. *Page / 24*

In addition, histamine plays an important part in the immune system; it increases its ability to supply blood to an injured area of the body. This helps the body to heal – especially from any condition causing itching, redness and inflammation. And now you can understand why your doctor may prescribe or suggest it as treatment for your eczema.

But an antihistamine is not without risks, especially if you have asthma or chronic bronchitis, high blood pressure, or glaucoma. It's also risky to take it if you have issues with your liver, kidney prostate or stomach. If you have any of these health conditions, tell your doctor about them.

Histamine Deficiency

Taking antihistamines can also lead to a histamine deficiency. If you take these and are troubled with mouth ulcers, headaches, excessive growth of body hair, or ringing in your ears, you may be lacking in this essential substance. You may also have a deficiency if you're experiencing visual disturbances.

In addition to physical issues, a histamine deficiency can also spark mental and emotional issues. More than one scientific study has found that approximately half of the individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia have decreased levels of histamine. Their condition improved when their histamine levels increased.

Chapter 4: Cure Eczema with Diet And Lifestyle Changes

Thinking about changing your diet in order to have a healthier lifestyle? Perhaps you've already made a few changes in the hope that your health improves in the process. But did you ever try to change your diet with the thought that your eczema could improve? If you have, then you're traveling down the right path.

Actually, this thought is more than just a theory. Study after scientific study has shown the value of the right foods, as opposed to prescription drugs and even dietary supplements, in restoring health.

It really matters little what type of health issue you are addressing. A sound, healthy, balanced diet seems to work miracles for your body. It should come as no surprise that the stubborn case of eczema you've been struggling with may also be vastly improved or even cured with an overhaul of your diet.

According to noted health specialist, Udo Erasmus, author of *Fats That Heal; Fats That Kill*, there are two primary causes of eczema. The first he labels as "malnutrition." The second is internal pollution.

Erasmus defines malnutrition as the body's deficiencies in various vitamins, minerals and other building blocks of sound health. Internal pollutants are toxic substances residing in your system which interfere with processes involved in maintaining good health and healing.

Because of this, he believes that eczema can not only be relieved, but reversed and even cured through changes in your eating habits. Among the type of foods which produce the greatest improvement are whole foods, fresh juices, so called "super foods", and food concentrates.

The key to curing eczema through diet is ensuring that you consume some 50 essential nutrients on a regular basis - which means nearly daily. If you should experience a deficiency of any of these (even one!), you're placing yourself at a greater risk for developing eczema.

You could, of courses, simply add specific dietary supplements to your current diet, but that may be tedious. Erasmus is talking about 50 (count

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'em – 50!) various nutrients, phytonutrients and other substances all working together to keep your eczema at bay.

This is only one of the reasons why he recommends receiving your nutrition through the foods you eat rather than from pills and tablets. But there's another reason why he staunchly believes in healing through diet; that's because no nutrient works in isolation. Taking vitamin C tablets, for example, can improve your immune system, making you more resistant to the flu and colds. Eating vitamin C rich foods, however, can also do so much more.

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Each nutrient, whether a vitamin, a mineral or any other building block of health, needs to work in concert with other nutrients to be able to perform its job as nature intended. When you consume food with a variety of nutrients that work together, the result is always larger and better than when you consume the nutrient(s) individually. This is called a *synergistic reaction*. That's when the sum effectiveness of the whole is greater than any of the ingredients taken on its own.

Erasmus noted that many individuals afflicted with eczema have low levels of essential fatty acids. Instead of taking these supplements, he recommends eating foods which are abundant in fatty acids (salmon, walnuts, olive oil, etc.). You'll not only receive everything the acids require to improve your skin condition, but will also reap the full benefits of all the other micronutrients found in the food.

What This Plan Does

The idea of this dietary change is not about turning all of your eating habits upside down and forcing some foreign regimen on you; that would be counterproductive. When you make sudden and drastic changes to your diet, you're unlikely to adopt these changes as a long-term or "forever" change.

This new way of eating becomes something imposed on you; you see it as a "duty" and long for your former habits (it's only natural). Before you know it, you've abandoned the plan. And that's the last thing we want to have happen here.

When you slowly transform your diet over a period of time, you're not traumatized by the sudden changes - because there really aren't any. You're really making no major sacrifices. Not only that, you'll undoubtedly experience some positive body effects in this process. This will boost your resolve and motivation to make a few more necessary changes.

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One of the best methods of approaching this new eating lifestyle is to set realistic goals. Think about setting goals that you will meet by specified dates. Perhaps in six months you want to be consuming meat only once a week, or you want to add more vitamin C-rich foods to your diet. These are worthy goals and surely ones you can obtain.

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In fact, when you set these goals, keep in mind that you do want to be able to reasonably meet them. If for some reason (any reason) along the path you find you may not be able to make a goal as you initially planned, then simply adjust it accordingly. There's no shame in that!

The alternative, after all, is to toss the plan out the window, shrug your shoulders, and give up. That will get you absolutely nowhere- except one step closer to using harsher prescription medications. Is that alternative worth it?

In order to set your personal goals- not only regarding your progress on this eating plan, but also for improvement in your eczema- read through this entire section to see exactly what's involved. Then assess how this nutrition plan differs from your current eating habits.

You'll then decide where your diet priorities lie. What is the first healthy change I should adopt in my eating habits? Is it easier to first reduce my consumption of cheese, or to cut back on my meats? Or perhaps my first step should be eating more foods containing fatty acids?

These are questions that only you can answer based on your current symptoms as well as your typical eating habits. Whatever changes you choose to embrace first, write them down. Everything is always more concrete and binding when you commit to it in writing.

What's The Ultimate Goal?

This diet is designed to balance your immune system through nutrition. Of course, it works best once you have adopted all of the guidelines. But that doesn't mean that changing a few of your habits slowly won't bring you relief; it absolutely can.

The diet works on two levels. It eliminates food which you may have a sensitivity or allergy to which you may not even be aware. But it also fills gaping nutritional holes in your eating habits. These "holes" (which you again probably didn't know even exist) can mean the difference, literally,

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between being eczema free for life or living every single day with itching, swollen, unsightly skin.

The first step involves removing any foods from your diet which you may possibly be allergic to. You may have some personal allergies you already know about, and you're probably already avoiding them whenever possible. But beyond that, there are foods that are known for aggravating eczema. Many individuals find that when they eliminate some or all of these foods, their skin condition clears considerably.

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Acid Versus Alkaline

Start by looking at foods from either an "acid-producing" or "alkaline-producing" perspective. If you've never done this before, it may take you a while to understand this, as well as to recognize which foods are better for you.

Many nutritionists that may have once been skeptical of this approach are now recognizing the importance of classifying food in this manner. Your body functions optimally when the pH balance - which is the method by which this is measured - is slightly above 7.0. A pH level above 7.0 indicates that your body is slightly alkaline.

Ideally, you'd like your body's pH level to be slightly alkaline in order to prevent your blood from becoming too acidic. No problem; my system automatically makes its own adjustments, right? There's only one catch in this theory. You're assuming that there are enough alkaline substances in your body that can make this adjustment, but that is not always the case.

If there's not an adequate supply, then your blood can turn acidic. Over time, this can lead to a variety of diseases (eczema is only one of these). Some nutritionists now believe that even cancer may be triggered by overly acidic blood.

You may think that the first categories of foods that this diet asks you to eliminate are the processed and pre-packaged foods. While it's a great idea, that's not the first step in this program.

The largest acid-producing foods are actually meats. ALL types of meats. Don't say you eat only chicken so this doesn't affect you, because it does. The ultimate goal is to eliminate beef, pork and even chicken from your diet. How you get there is up to you.

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Do you eat meat at every meal? Then perhaps you should have one meatless meal a day. If you eat meat once a day, create a meatless day once a week initially. Remember: make changes at your own speed.

Whatever decision you make, stay with it for a full 90 days. That's right, 90 days. Don't try to be too ambitious. It's better to choose a smaller goal that's realistic than a grandiose plan that'll fall apart in several days.

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Once you've cleared that 90-day hurdle, commit to try another 90 days. If your first three months go well, you may then be able to make more in-depth changes. The most important aspect is that you're making healthy changes that will last a lifetime.

Wait! What About Fish?

We haven't spoken about fish yet. Yes, Erasmus does consider fish a meat. And yes, it's acid producing. But he believes that eating fish in moderation is not only allowable, but essential to this eczema-conquering diet. Fish -- especially oily, cold water fish -- contain *essential* fatty acids which are natural eczema-busting substances. Most of us don't receive enough of these special acids. This is especially true for those who are battling eczema.

Erasmus views eating fish as a natural trade-off. While on the one hand, fish does produce acid, it's also an abundant source of essential fatty acids. And that's something most individuals suffering with eczema are woefully deficient in.

Eating fish a few times a week can only improve your eczema. It's also a much more efficient way to get those essential fatty acids than through dietary supplements. Keep in mind this constant guideline of Erasmus's: it's healthier to eat your nutrients than to swallow them in pill form.

Overall, you should strive to eat a diet consisting of 75 percent of alkaline-producing foods to 25 percent of acid-producing foods.

Dairy Products

Perhaps you already know you have a sensitivity to dairy foods - at least some of them. For individuals with eczema, this seems to be another area of the diet where food allergies and sensitivities seem very common.

There's actually a good reason for this. According to many nutritionists, the molecules which dairy foods are composed of are larger than those of other

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foods. This makes them difficult to digest. Some individuals may not notice this, or haven't yet made the all-important connection. Dairy is a dietary area you should consider reducing your consumption of, or even eliminating it entirely.

Good-bye, High-Glycemic Grains

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It's time to talk about the nitty-gritty. This is the aspect of the eating plan that many balk at. I'm talking pastries, doughnuts, pies, cakes, corn chips . . . You see where this is leading, I'm sure. These are the foods we have a love-hate relationship with. We love the way they taste, but hate the ultimately destructive health effects of eating too many of them.

But you'll be surprised to find some other foods on this list as well - foods you may believe are healthy for you. Let's start with white rice. Yeah, sorry- no good! Instant grains are also on this list, as are white flour, pasta and instant processed grain mixes. Some of the easiest foods to make may be adversely affecting your eczema.

These foods are all rated high on the *glycemic index*. If you haven't heard of it, this index is a measurement of how fast your body produces insulin. When you eat these foods, your insulin level spikes high; it happens too quickly for your body to effectively use it. Just as quickly, however, your insulin level then plummets, starting, in some cases, an unending cycle of fluctuating blood sugar levels.

Yeast-Containing Breads

Many individuals develop allergies or sensitivities to breads that contain yeast. This is because the yeast actually ferments in your body. Yes, as in producing alcohol. It's definitely toxic. Specifically, the alcohol interferes with many of the tasks that key enzymes perform in converting fatty acids into hormones.

Not only that, but alcohol is also detrimental to the enzymes responsible for detoxification. Examine the amount of grains - especially the high-glycemic grains - that you eat. This could be one of the causes of several quite common health conditions, including menopausal issues, enlarged prostate and even skin problems, like eczema.

Your alternative is to eat breads that don't spark any allergic reactions. There are actually quite a few from which to choose. These bread options are made primarily from whole rye and are leavened with lactobacillus.

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You may also want to substitute unleavened bread that doesn't contain flour, sugar, oils, and of course yeast. The only ingredients these breads should have are the fiber and the germ of the whole grain. These bread choices are, for the most part, made from a combination of amaranth, flax, millet, oats, sprouted spelt, or quinoa.

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Avoid Hydrogenated Oils and Margarine

It wasn't too long ago that margarine was the darling of the dairy set. It was, according to nutritionists, a healthier alternative to butter. As with many other substances in the nutrition world, this premise has come full circle. Margarine is not the spread of choice - a healthy one at least! - any longer.

Margarine falls under the larger umbrella of hydrogenated oils and fats. These fats are man-made. They've been proven time and again to be part of the cause for a host of degenerative diseases, including cancer and heart disease.

On the plus side, avoiding this unhealthy oil is getting easier by the day. At one time you could find it in every processed and packaged food. And every snack food from cookies to chips was loaded with it. The reason? It has an incredibly long shelf life.

But several years ago, the government - as well as public health officials - pressured food manufacturers to reduce their reliance on these fats and oils. While they aren't totally removed from your supermarket landscape, they aren't nearly as widespread as they once were.

When you're looking for oils that will help you avoid diet-related flare-ups of your eczema, you'll want to try the cold-pressed versions first. You'll especially want to try flaxseed, hempseed and walnut oils.

There are some oils that are perfect for baking and cooking. They're ideal to use if you're trying to control your skin problem as long as you don't heat them above 212 degrees. They include safflower, sunflower and pumpkin oils.

Sesame, almond and olive oils can be heated to about 325 degrees. This is considered light sautéing. Those oils which can safely be used for frying or browning at degrees of 375 degrees include coconut and ghee, or clarified butter.

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Artificial Sweeteners

It's a fact. Artificial sugar, of any kind, is nothing but a chemical additive. Every one of them is composed of man-made ingredients. There is one exception; aspartame, which is still considered artificial.

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Even though it's composed of natural materials, it is still not regarded as a safe alternative to sugar. Why? It contains naturally occurring substances that nature never intended to be placed together into one product. And there's good reason for this.

Aspartame contains two amino acids, phenylalanine and aspartic acid, as well as methyl alcohol. You may know this final substance simply as methanol.

Methanol is toxic to your system because it doesn't contain the enzymes required for detoxification. Because of this, it stays in your system five times longer than the type of alcohol found in beer, wine and liquor.

The only way that your body can rid itself of this alcohol is by converting it to formaldehyde, then to formic acid, and eventually to carbon dioxide.

"Oh, but I don't use aspartame," you protest. "So I have nothing to worry about." Ah! While this may be a comforting thought, it's definitely an inaccurate one. Aspartame is used, some might say hidden, in more than 80,000 products. Chances are good you've encountered it somewhere in your diet.

Consider this fact as well. A 12-ounce can of an artificially sweetened soft drink contains 10 mg of methanol. Given this fact, it's entirely too easy to quickly exceed the EPA limit for this substance.

A healthier alternative to refined sugar and artificial sweeteners is stevia. It's a natural substance derived from the juice of the Brazilian bush of the same name. It's actually 30 to 40 times sweeter than sucrose.

Stevia has been used in South American as a natural sweetener for hundreds of years. The beauty of this natural liquid is that even a tiny quantity can make a big sweetened impact on your food. If you use one teaspoon of table sugar now, you'll only need to use two drops of stevia.

Subsequently one teaspoon of finely ground stevia equals an entire cup of sugar. Considering all the other health risks associated with refined sugar, you may want to try stevia regardless of your current skin condition.

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Non-Foods

When is a food not a food? Non-foods are enriched with synthetic nutrients or chemicals. Here are a few more that you should avoid in order to improve your eczema condition:

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- Alcohol
- Coffee (caffeinated and decaffeinated)
- Food additives
- Food colorings
- Preservatives
- Salt
- Synthetic dietary supplements
- Tea

It probably doesn't need to be said, but this describes most packaged and processed foodstuffs (yes, you knew it would come down to eliminating these, now didn't you?). Avoid as many of these as possible. Since these "non-foods" seem to be ubiquitous, this is asking quite a bit.

But, remember- any step you take toward the goal of an Eczema-Free Diet is a good step, regardless. Rather than berating yourself for not being able to eliminate all packaged and processed foods at once, choose those few at a time you will avoid. Once you've done that successfully, you can then add a few more to your elimination list.

Soy Products

Soy? Really? And all along you thought soy was a healthy choice. The opinions of nutritionists and related research have come full circle once again. For quite a long time, nutritionists and researchers believed that soy was a healthy food choice of the next generation.

But the truth is, soy products contain some harmful substances, among them enzyme inhibitors. Specifically, these inhibitors block trypsin as well as several other enzymes that are essential to the digestion of protein.

That's not the only adverse affect of soy, though. Soybeans also contain excessive levels of phytic acids, which are substances that block the uptake of certain minerals that are needed for good health. These include calcium, iron, magnesium and zinc.

Among the worst soy offenders are the following products:

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- Tofu
- Milk
- Baby formula
- Protein
- Flour
- Cheese
- Ice cream

There are a few exceptions to the limitation of soy products in your diet. You can eat miso, tamari sauce, and tempeh without the worry of aggravating your eczema.

Making Your New Lifestyle Work

It's one thing to be given a list of "do's" and "don'ts" when it comes to your diet. But it's quite another thing to actually work this list into your daily dietary routine. This is something that you must do at your own speed, in your own way.

The key to successfully adopting this eating plan is to adapt it to fit your habits, likes, and dislikes. Don't force yourself to eat foods that you know you absolutely hate. There's a wide enough range of options that just about everyone can find at least a few foods you enjoy.

But then again, don't limit yourself! Why not try a taste of a new food every now and then. If it's eczema-friendly, give it a try. It may be a food that you hated as a child, shied away from all your life and haven't tasted in decades. Keep in mind that as you age, your tastes also change. Something you didn't like several years ago may now become palatable – even enjoyable – to you now.

Don't think of this new eating plan as a diet. You may give up if you think of it as a strict set of restrictions. Think of it as an invaluable healing plan for your eczema.

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Chapter 5: Supplement Your Diet With Vital Nutrients

Of course, eating your way to healthy skin is preferable to swallowing a bunch of vitamin, mineral and other dietary supplements. But that doesn't necessarily mean that the two courses of natural treatment are mutually exclusive.

Why not improve your overall health – and your eczema in the process – by selectively adding specific nutrients to your system? With the right supplements, you may see near miraculous improvements in your skin condition.

Vitamins: Following the Letters of Health

Why not start alphabetically? Vitamin A has long been known to improve skin – regardless of what's plaguing it. It's especially known for preventing dryness; vitamin A and eczema are a great match.

If you're planning on taking this in quantities that may be larger than typically recommended, you need to be cautious not to take in an excessive amount. Think about taking this nutrient in an emulsion form. It's the safest way to ingest the higher amounts.

Some doctors recommend that you take 100,000 IU daily for the first month. Then reduce that in half to 50,000 for the following two weeks. After two weeks, reduce that amount by half again, down to 25,000.

Before you begin this regimen, but sure to check with your health-care provider. He'll be able to tell you if a higher dosage is safe for your particular overall health condition.

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Meet The B Family Of Vitamins

Think of the B-Complex of vitamins and your first thought is probably energy, and rightly so. This family of nutrients has been held in high esteem for generations for providing your body with the energy it needs to get through a day.

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You may not have known the vital role that this family of vitamins plays in maintaining and healing your skin. If you suffer with eczema, it's time you get to know what these nutrients can do for you.

When it comes to skin care, all members of this vitamin family work together. While a good B-complex supplement is necessary, you can still augment that with three individual members, according to Dr. James Balch. In his book ***Prescription for Nutritional Healing***, he recommends fortifying your system with additional niacin, B6, and B12.

Niacin, also known as B3, specifically supports the skin and nervous system. If you have a B3 deficiency, it would appear as dry, rough, thick skin (sound familiar?).

B6 promotes healthy skin as well, but it's also a crucial player in the formation of red blood cells. Symptoms you'll notice when your body lacks this nutrient include oily facial skin, acne, and flaky, inflamed skin.

Finally, **B12** is required for the creation of new cells and their longevity.

Vitamin C

With anti-inflammatory properties, it's easy to see why **vitamin C** can help in the healing of your eczema. It also helps in stabilizing cellular membranes. But more than importantly, this nutrient is also essential for the production of collagen, a major component of skin.

Wait; we're not done yet with vitamin C. It also acts as a natural antihistamine, which means it can help reduce the need to scratch. It also means that by increasing your consumption of vitamin C rich foods - or by taking a daily supplement - you may be able to reduce the prescription antihistamines that your health care provider has originally given you.

How much should you take? Some natural health experts recommend taking a minimum of 1,000 mg daily.

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Vitamin E

Like vitamin C, vitamin E is a fat-soluble nutrient that can help to relieve the need to scratch. It also hydrates your skin, which will make it less dry. Both of these qualities could improve your eczema.

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In a recent study, researchers discovered an association between vitamin E and the incidences of eczema in children. Those children with the highest vitamin E compounds, known as tocopherols, had a 67 percent lower risk of developing eczema than those with lesser amounts of the vitamin.

Think Zinc For Eczema Relief

According to an increasing compilation of research, zinc may help improve your eczema-related symptoms. Some health care providers suggest starting this useful home remedy with a generous 50 mg daily serving. As your symptoms improve, you can reduce the amount.

Don't expect zinc to work overnight. It may take up to several months before you notice any discernible improvement in your skin.

Consult your health-care advisor before you begin taking a zinc supplement. You should never take more than 30 mg daily without a doctor's supervision.

Probiotics

Probiotics, the so-called "good bacteria" in your body, has been proven to actually prevent eczema in infants when the mother-to-be takes them. Probiotics are naturally occurring live microorganisms which live in your intestines.

Their presence is crucial in minimizing the (also naturally occurring) bad bacteria that also live there. But more than that, they also improve the function of your immune system, as well as strengthen the protective barrier within your digestive tract.

Scientific studies reveal that babies who are at a high risk for developing allergic disorders and eczema possess a different bacterial composition than those without these disorders. Surprisingly, ingesting probiotics while your child is in utero may actually lower his or her risk of developing eczema.

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Before birth? Yes. Pregnant women who took probiotic supplements seemed to give birth to babies who possessed a lower rate of occurrence of eczema. It never really is too early to start your child with healthy habits.

There is more than just one study that shows that probiotics are a promising preventive measure for eczema. In another study, researchers examined two groups of newborns. One group was given probiotics, as were their mothers. The second group was given an inert placebo. Both groups took these supplements for six months.

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When the children reached two years of age, the probiotics appeared to give that group of children some type of immunity against developing eczema. Those who had taken them had a much lower incidence of developing this skin disorder.

This research demonstrates the effectiveness of probiotics as a preventive measure. What about using it to help reduce an already existing case of eczema? Here the statistics are also good - but only if you're already sensitive to food allergies. If you're not, the probiotics may not work for you, according to several studies.

Go Fish

It's a fact. Fish, especially the cold-water variety, can help alleviate the symptoms of eczema; we mentioned that in the previous chapter. Fish contains an abundance of omega-3 fatty acids, which help to decrease the inflammation of the eczema. Many individuals who don't care for fish opt to take an omega-3 fish oil supplement.

Increasingly popular, fish oil supplements can be found just about everywhere. An effective serving is approximately three to four grams daily.

Virgin Coconut Oil: Your Ticket to Paradise

Virgin coconut oil has, indeed, alleviated the most aggravating symptoms of eczema for many individuals. And it's a distinct possibility that you could become one of those people singing its praises. Unlike harsh corticosteroids, it's mild enough to even massage into your face.

In the past, individuals tried this home remedy based solely on anecdotal evidence – word of mouth. Now, controlled scientific studies confirm what many knew all along. One of the most recent of these studies clearly

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demonstrated the positive effects of coconut oil when it comes to the healing of skin wounds and irritations.

In these studies, the use of the oil “dramatically increased” the rate of healing. It does this, the researchers believe, through the stimulation of collagen production. The key to this rapid healing was the amazingly quick formation of blood vessels in the area receiving the topical application.

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Another study, published several years ago in the professional journal, *Dermatitis*, found that coconut oil possesses emollient properties which not only enhance the healing of skin, but also its protection. Coconut oil can help to prevent bacterial infection(s) – exactly what you’re at risk for developing when you’re suffering from eczema.

Help From Kelp

Given the nutrient content of this natural substance from the sea, you can be just about sure it’ll improve your condition.

Sea kelp, in fact, contains nearly two dozen amino acids, as well as 60 minerals and phytonutrients. Among some of the better known of these are vitamins B12, C, E, and K; but that’s not all. Kelp is considered an alkaline food, which also goes a long way towards restoring your pH balance – and in the process, your health.

Enough of its nifty features, you say. Specifically, what will it do for my eczema? Just how will it help me? First and foremost, kelp enhances the overall quality of your skin, and that’s always a great start. Beyond that, it also boosts your immune system, which helps to protect you from a variety of infections.

Try Neem Oil

Neem oil? You’re making that word up, aren’t you? That very well may be your first reaction; it certainly was mine. Neem oil is the pressed oil of the neem tree (pretty straightforward, isn’t it?). The neem tree is an evergreen that is native to the Indian subcontinent, but now can be found in many parts of the world.

Why neem oil? For starters, it has excellent antibacterial properties. That means it can actually help to heal or even prevent a bacterial infection.

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Chapter 6: Herbs, Homeopathy and More: Natural Methods To Cure Eczema

Perhaps the time has come, or perhaps you think the time has already passed. No matter when you decide to stop relying solely on prescribed medication and to embark on a more natural treatment of eczema, it's perfect timing.

You may be looking for more natural therapies. Maybe you've been given corticosteroid creams and lotions by your doctor, but you still don't feel as if they were doing all that was possible to help your condition. Your skin is still itchy, red, and inflamed. And you're worried about the potential harmful side effects of these harsh medical chemicals.

When someone then says that he has an herbal ointment to help ease your symptoms, you're naturally skeptical. If the best of conventional medicine isn't working for you, how can you expect some herb to be effective?

You should, however, take a second look. And especially consider herbal-based gels and ointments. They carry none of the corticosteroids, none of the adverse side effects, yet all of the healing power and more.

Take Your Pick: Licorice Or Chamomile

You may want to start off with either **licorice** or **chamomile**. Both have been subjected to rigid scientific tests. In a double blind study, researchers compared gel composed of 1-2% licorice with a placebo. After only two weeks of use, the herbal licorice gels - both the 1% and the 2% - were shown to be more effective than the placebo at treating eczema.

Not surprisingly, the gel containing two percent licorice was even more effective than the one percent in its ability to reduce redness, inflammation and itching.

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Another study compared a **chamomile-based cream** to a 0.5 percent hydrocortisone cream, as well as a placebo. It took only two weeks to show that the chamomile product was more effective at reducing the symptoms of eczema than the hydrocortisone.

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For many years, it was assumed that **witch hazel** was also an effective natural tool to help relieve the symptoms of eczema. However, the latest scientific research unfortunately doesn't prove this to be the case.

Specifically, research conducted in Germany investigated witch hazel use among 72 individuals. All were diagnosed with "moderately severe eczema." The witch hazel worked no better than the placebo.

St. John's Wort: Not Just For Depression, Anymore!

Most commonly thought of as an anti-depressant herbal remedy, St. John's Wort is also useful for the effective relief of eczema symptoms.

In a double blind study, those with eczema used this herb topically on just one arm; on the other arm they used a placebo. The arm which actually received the herbal treatment healed significantly better than the other.

Herbs From India: Sweet Relief

It's true. Don't overlook those herbal remedies that come from the classic Ayurvedic system of medicine of India- there's a reason why it's the oldest medical system on the planet. This ancient system is highly respected not only in its native land, but also in the West.

As with Chinese medicine, the Indian herbs and the reasoning behind the remedies may not be familiar to you. But the bottom line is that these remedies work. That's what gives Ayurvedic medicine its longevity.

The herb **babul** is derived from the bark of the tree by the same name. Boil the herb in water and use its vapors on the affected areas of the skin.

Butea is a well-known Ayurvedic solution to many skin conditions, including eczema. The seeds of the butea tree are used. Mix these seeds with lime juice then apply the mixture to your symptoms.

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Another effective Ayurvedic remedy is **linseed oil**. Create a linseed oil and lime water mixture. Then apply it to your lesions.

Madhuca oil is pressed from the leaves of the madhuca tree. Apply this healing oil to the areas of your skin affected with the itching and burning of eczema.

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Homeopathy's Unique Holistic Approach

Don't expect to walk into the office of a homeopathic doctor and tick off your list of symptoms, and then expect treatment. He will eventually treat your symptoms, but first he'll want to know a little more about you and your general health.

Homeopathic medicine looks at the person as a whole before the practitioner makes recommendations for specific treatments.

The practice of homeopathy views eczema as an external representation of an internal complaint. The result of this disorder is the loss of both your vitality and a portion of the proper functioning of your immune system.

The results of treating the whole person mean that your body can then handle the symptoms on its own. Enhancement of the immune system ensures that your body's defenses are able to treat and defeat the disease naturally instead of depending on harsh, artificial medications.

When treated by homeopathic methods, you'll notice you won't be using topical creams. This may seem counterintuitive at first, but you'll discover how effective this system is.

In treating the whole person, your homeopathic health care provider assesses not only the physical state of your health, but your mental and emotional states as well. Moreover, he'll take a family history and a personal health history.

Before making any recommendations, though, he'll also scrutinize which areas of your body are affected and ask if you know of any specific triggers that set off the flare-ups, as well as any measures that you've taken which may have helped your condition. All of these factors are taken into consideration when he begins prescribing your treatment.

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Ask any homeopathic provider: he'll tell you that eczema is curable. This system of medicine not only alleviates your existing symptoms but also prevents future recurrences.

There are certain homeopathic treatments that are used more often than others.

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Arsenicum album is one of them. You may also see it abbreviated as Ars Albi. An extremely diluted form of arsenic, this specific remedy has been used even by conventional medicine for many years to treat a wide variety of health conditions.

This remedy is used specifically to treat individuals with digestive problems in addition to the eczema.

The remedy **dulcamara** is suggested for individuals whose eczema surfaces on the skin in the mucous membranes and around the joints. This remedy is also known as bittersweet or bittersweet nightshade.

Don't be surprised if your homeopathic provider recommends **graphite**, especially if you have problems with a slow metabolism. Yes, it's the same graphite material that is used in pencils. You may be a candidate for graphite if your skin is tough and leathery.

Homeopathic doctors recommend **lycopodium** for many acute and chronic conditions in addition to eczema. This remedy works on the soft tissues, blood vessels, joints, the liver and the heart.

If your eczema is accompanied by anxiety, your doctor may suggest **mezereum**. This is especially true if your anxiety manifests itself in the form of stomach disorders. You'll be prescribed this if your symptoms include extreme itching with eruptions that begin as blisters which ooze and finally form thick crusts.

Got dry skin that cracks? You may be a candidate for **petroleum**. This may also be the right choice for you if your skin gets infected easily or is tough and leathery.

Individuals with blister-like eruptions may be treated with **Rhus toxicodendron** or **Rhus tox**. Lesions that are red and swollen can be soothed through the application of this warm moisture. Additional symptoms which may be effectively treated with this remedy include irritability and anxiety, as well as stiff muscles.

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Intense itching. Burning. Inflamed eruptions. These qualities best describe your eczema, and **sulphur** may be the homeopathic solution. This is true if you experience red, scaling or crusted skin. This remedy is also effective for those who have used traditional medications repeatedly without receiving any relief.

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Those individuals with chapped and deeply cracked hands are very often given **Hepar sulphuris calcareum**. Slow-healing symptoms are also improved with this remedy. The person who responds best to this treatment is one that usually feels irritable or vulnerable, with a poorly functioning immune system.

Visualization

Okay, so this concept may sound like New Age voodoo or Pollyanna thinking, but before you dismiss it entirely, consider the scientific evidence supporting this.

Try **visualization**. That's the suggestion of New York City-based dermatologist Iona H. Ginsburg. Her reasons? Anxiety, she explains, is not an inconsequential contributor to eczema flare-ups. Dr. Ginsburg administered standard psychological tests to 36 individuals with eczema and 34 without the condition. She discovered that those with eczema were significantly more anxious.

Visualization is a proven effective approach for easing anxiety and in the process, eczema. Just ask Dr. Gerald N. Epstein, director of the Academy of Integrative Medicine and Mental Imaging in New York City. He "prescribes" an exercise he calls "palm fingers" for his patients that he considers to suffer from anxiety-related eczema.

While he may "prescribe" this, you certainly don't need doctor's supervision or permission to perform it; it's outlined right here. The next time you've got the urge to itch, try this. In fact, perform this exercise whenever you feel your skin itch.

Your Fingers As Palm Leaves

Start by closing your eyes. Take three deep breaths. Imagine your fingers as palm leaves. Place your palm leaf fingers on the areas of your skin affected by eczema. While you're doing this, also visualize that your leaves-fingers are covered with honey. This honey flows over your itchy, sore skin,

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providing healing relief. Now, see your skin as clear and healthy. Then open your eyes.

Acupressure And Eczema

There are few of us who haven't heard of **acupressure** these days. Once a mysterious import from the Orient whose credentials were suspect and results hazy, acupressure is now a recognized form of therapy.

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It's similar to acupuncture, in which tiny needles are placed in your body along your meridian lines in order to stimulate healing, balance and eventual relief. Acupressure, however, doesn't involve needles. Much as the name implies, pressure is applied to certain spots on your body in order to facilitate relief from your eczema symptoms.

Acupressure works well on skin disorders like eczema, which are either caused or worsened in the presence of fatigue, nervous tension or stress. Some say its success lies in its ability to ease the tension in your muscles while at the same time increasing your circulation.

The beauty of acupressure, though, is that depending on where the pressure needs to be applied, you can do it yourself. Imagine a "do-it-yourself" healing program for eczema that doesn't even cost much. It doesn't get much better than this!

Here's a short set of instructions to get you started. If this method could bring you any relief, you'll probably want to read more about it.

You're about to apply gentle pressure to the left and right sides of your lower back. The spots are in line with your navel. They're approximately three finger widths from your spine. These are called the B27 and B43 acupuncture points.

Press both points simultaneously, using the back of your hands. The most productive approach is to make loose fists with your hands, then place the backs of your fists directly on the points.

Shelley's Success Story

Meet Shelley. In her early 30s, she suffered from eczema. Her hands had harsh red, scabbed wounds; sometimes the wounds would emit a thin, watery discharge. She knew from experience that her condition worsened when the weather also did – the colder the temperature, the worse her disorder got.

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She had the condition for several years before actually identified it as eczema. After receiving several acupuncture sessions, her condition lessened considerably, thanks to a natural rebalance of her immune system.

Take A Bath: In Oatmeal

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No, it's not actually how you may be visualizing it. When I first heard about this method, I pictured myself sitting in a bathtub filled with nothing but oatmeal and milk. That's not the case; the oats are actually finely ground and added to your warm bath water, producing a thin, powdery grit that exfoliates your skin.

The benefits of this type of bath are twofold. It helps to relieve the physical symptoms of eczema. But it can also be an excellent approach to ridding your body of anxiety – a major contributor to flare-ups. And the icing on the cake? You step out of the tub with smooth, soft skin.

Why oatmeal? For one thing, it has a long historical reputation of alleviating eczema symptoms. This history is now verified by scientific research and on-going discoveries. Science now indicates that there are four compounds in oatmeal which can aid in easing your symptoms. They are proteins, polysaccharides, fats and saponin.

The proteins work to protect you from allergens and other irritants that often trigger an initial incidence of eczema or a flare-up. Meanwhile, the polysaccharides are lifesavers once moistened. They create a gel-like substance which provides your skin with protection by not allowing it to dry out completely.

Similarly, the fats also help to keep your skin hydrated. And last, saponins are natural and effective cleansers.

Of course, you can buy one of the many commercial products available. But you can, just as easily, make your own oatmeal bath. And then you're assured that all of your ingredients are natural.

Here is a sure-fire recipe. You're going to love it.

Oatmeal Bath "Recipe" For Protection, Relaxation

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Pour approximately one-quarter cup of oatmeal into a bowl. Using a spoon, crush the larger clumpier pieces. Transfer this from the bowl to a coffee filter (preferably a V shaped one) or a piece of muslin. Then tie the filter or muslin with a string or place a rubber band around it.

Now you're ready to start drawing your bath water. Place the oatmeal-filled bag into the end of the tub opposite the faucet. If you'd like to pour a cup of either regular milk or buttermilk into the tub, you can also do so.

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And now here's the step you've been waiting for. Step into that tub. Once you're sitting in it, you can gently squeeze the sachet of oatmeal in order to release more of its healing power.

Relax in this healing atmosphere for at least ten minutes.

Brrr! Baby It's Cold Outside

It's inevitable. Even individuals with the healthiest of skin very often experience dry, cracked skin in the frigid winter months. You can easily understand why this occurs. All you need to do is to go outside to feel the cold, windy, harsh weather, which is of course not the best of environments for eczema.

Oh yes, I know that you're wearing "protective" clothing. But did you ever stop to think how "protective" that clothing really is? Sure, it keeps that wind off your skin. It keeps you warm. But take a good look at the fabrics. They are no doubt causing your skin some irritation in the process. Just think about one fabric in particular: wool. Enough said.

Ah ha! You decide to outwit Mother Nature and just stay inside all day – especially on the nastiest of days. While it sounds like a good idea . . .

Although the environment inside is little better, the furnace of your house runs more often (sometimes it feels as if it runs continually!) which makes the air inside even drier than that outside. This doesn't help your symptoms either.

Not only that, with the popularity of going green and the cost of heating, many of us are keeping the indoor temperature as low as we can possibly stand it. Again, these are not conditions that are conducive to creating healthy, eczema-free skin.

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Protect Your Skin

This means you have to work twice as hard – or so it seems – to protect your skin in order to keep your eczema symptoms to a minimum. Yes, there really are some steps you can take to help guard your skin. Keep using only soaps that are mild on your skin. Use that moisturizer sitting on your dresser even more frequently on those colder, drier days than you normally do.

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Invest in a humidifier if you can; it helps to put moisture in the air. This, combined with maintaining a reasonably warm temperature in your home, goes a long way in keeping your symptoms from becoming too extreme.

We've talked about what you as an adult can do to help yourself. The following chapter discusses how you can help your child not only survive and overcome his case of eczema, but thrive!

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Bonus Section

Chapter 7: Curing Eczema In Children

Granted, life isn't easy when you have eczema. But, if you have a child suffering from this disorder, then your life isn't easy either. Not only do you have to care for the physical symptoms, assuage the emotional symptoms, but it hurts you emotionally just watching your child suffer.

That's why so many parents search frantically, grabbing on to anything they can to help at least ease their child's symptoms a bit. Deep down, there isn't a parent alive that doesn't pray for a miraculous cure for eczema.

Until that cure appears, here are some guidelines to help make your child's life a bit easier (and your heart hurt a little less knowing you're doing all that you can!).

Prevent Flare-Ups

Perhaps no other aspect of eczema is as puzzling and frustrating for parents as the reoccurrence of it. Don't think for a moment that you need to stand by watching helplessly. Take control of the situation as soon as possible; you'd be amazed how quickly even a little action can alleviate the flare-up. Many of the steps outlined here you may already know, and some are even considered common sense if you've dealt with eczema for a while.

If battling eczema is new to you and your child, you may not have considered this approach. In either instance, these remedies bear repeating.

"Triggering" Out The Situation

Work with your child in teaching him what triggers the flare-ups and how he can avoid them. At first, neither of you may know what sparks a flare-up. But after a while, these igniting incidences will be quite recognizable.

Some of the items that most commonly cause flare-ups include harsh soaps and known food allergens. Eczema seems to occur - especially in a child -

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when the individual either overheats or is exposed to colder than usual temperatures.

Certain types of clothing material are also known to trigger this skin disorder as well. The most common culprits are wool and polyester. In addition, try to keep your child's skin well moistened; apply lotions. In some ways, keeping the skin moist may be the most effective measure of all. This method is most beneficial since the cause of eczema has yet to be determined.

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Any moisturizer helps in controlling eczema. But the "greasier" the lotion, the better it'll work. Consider using petroleum jelly (like Vaseline) or Aquaphor. For best results, you may need to test several moisturizers to see which works best on your child's skin.

A child's job, of course, is to play, to run, and to have a good time. But if your child has eczema, this may also mean that he experiences flare ups when he runs and gets sweaty. Children, just like adults, experience the possibility of a flare-up when they are exposed to extreme heat.

This is particularly hard on you, I know. Try some way – and only you and your child can come to this happy medium – to limit the real hard play periods during hot weather. Your child may even begin to make the connection himself and learn to monitor his own actions accordingly.

What Would Your Doctor Do?

When you take your child to his doctor's appointment for a flare-up, you may receive a prescription for topical steroids. It may be possible that your doctor will prescribe nonsteroidal cream, like Protopic or Elidel. Of course, both of these options are only if your child is older than two years. Neither of these medications is to be given to anyone younger than two.

There's a wide range of topical steroids available, many of which are mild enough to use for children. You can even find a few of these that are safe enough to use on your child's face. The strongest of these creams are generally not prescribed for children.

The most common mid-strength steroids you can expect to be prescribed are Cutivate, Dermatod, Elocom and Locoidlipocream. These lotions, however, should never be used on your child's face or under a diaper.

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Your Child, Eczema and "The Bully"

Sad but true. If your child has eczema, he may experience bullying and teasing from schoolmates. This may cause him to withdraw into himself, and to become introverted. While you may not be able to stop the harassment, be sure to inform your child's teacher of his condition. Also, encourage your child to frankly talk about his feelings with you.

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Sleep? Who Needs Sleep?

Your child does! It's very possible that sleep is something that your son or daughter is lacking at the moment. It very well may be a legitimate concern to you because sleep is essential to his growth and development.

But more than that, sleep disturbances due to the constant itching and irritation of eczema can adversely affect your child's mood and his behavior. A lack of sleep only makes it that much more difficult for him to pay attention in class.

Ensure your child's teacher knows of his eczema. Talk to her about his sleep problems as well. Be sure to apply lotion to your child prior to bedtime in order to enhance your child's comfort level.

Your Child and Self-Confidence

Eczema can hurt the self-confidence of even the toughest adults. Think of how it may be affecting your child, whose emotions are even more vulnerable to the exposure of others. Children, for the most part, find it especially difficult to handle their condition. This situation may, very well, result in a poor self-image.

This, in turn, could very well spawn a chain reaction. And eventually this may negative thought pattern could inhibit his development – both socially and academically.

This is where your input as mom, dad, grandparent or guardian can be extremely influential. Encourage your child at every opportunity to rise above their skin condition, and assure your child of his or her worth.

Is Your Infant At Risk?

The statistics may startle you. Up to 20 percent of infants contend with eczema. You may be wondering if your newborn or even your toddler is at risk. Several factors exist which may put your child at a higher risk than

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average for developing eczema. One of these factors that increase your baby's chances of developing it is the incidence of this skin disorder in other family members.

Before you think that the statistics here are gloomy, you may be surprised. For example, as odd as this may seem, your infant is still at a low risk of developing this disorder if one of his siblings had or has it. (You thought it would be higher, didn't you?)

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Consider your child at "moderate" risk, the experts say, if either you or your partner has eczema. Considerably speaking, the odds are not bad there either.

The clincher is when both parents suffer from this skin disorder. That puts your baby at a high risk for eventually acquiring it.

You Want Me To Do What? Put My Baby On A Diet?

Think about it: if diet exerts an effect on an adult's eczema symptoms, why wouldn't it influence, at least partially, an infant's? Good question. According to many natural health specialists, some cases of eczema may be triggered by food sensitivities, regardless of the child's age.

Some say that the appearance of this skin condition may be an initial clue that your child could have a food allergy. The more severe the symptoms, in fact, the more likely that it's caused by a food allergy.

Why My Baby?

Science is getting closer to answering that question with some accuracy. Research is beginning to indicate that children with these symptoms may very well absorb food differently than those without the disorder.

You have already realized that it's anybody's guess which foods actually trigger eczema symptoms in children. It appears that there's no rhyme or reason to it. It's very true that food triggers are highly individualistic. But despite this, there are certain foods that are more likely to ignite eczema symptoms than others.

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Below is just a partial list of some of the most common eczema-triggering foods:

- Cow's milk
- Dairy products (cheese, yogurt, ice cream)
- Fish
- Nuts
- Shellfish
- Soy products
- Tomatoes
- Tropical Fruits
- Wheat
- Chemical additives

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But My Child Isn't Allergic To Peanuts!

No, he may not be; at least for the moment. And he may never be. But research shows that nearly 20 percent of infants with eczema eventually develop a peanut allergy by the time they reach two years of age. Currently, there's no way to discern which children will grow up with a peanut allergy.

It is possible that your infant can eat some of these foods without issue. But it would be best to wait until he's at least one year old before introducing any of the foods on this list. You, additionally, may want to wait until after he's three years to introduce nuts and shellfish into your child's diet.

If your child is already eating solid foods, then you may want to try to discern which foods,

if any, your child may be sensitive to.

When your child eats a certain food, pay close attention to his symptoms. Do his eczema symptoms worsen? Be patient though. The symptoms don't appear immediately following a meal. Any arising reactions to food triggers can be delayed until up to two hours following the meal. In some food cases, six hours must pass. And it's not unlikely that it may take an entire 24 hours before any worsening of the symptoms is detected.

This process can make it extremely difficult to judge which foods are actually influencing your child's eczema. If after your child eats, you notice that he or she is scratching more, you may have found the culprit. But of course, he'll eat more than one kind of food within a 24-hour period. So how can you sort through this maze of potential food triggers?

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Journaling: Your Child's Diet

That's where a food journal can help. In fact, it's practically essential if you want to get an accurate accounting of what could be causing your child's problems. List all the foods that your child eats throughout the day. If you can, also record the time that your child ate. Doing this will keep you more observant, which may very well help you find the crucial missing piece of the allergic puzzle.

Then record the symptoms that your child experiences, as well as the times that you noticed them first appear. Review this often; you may in time be able to discern a pattern. But again, be patient. It may take weeks or even months before you'll be able to establish some definitive cause and effect.

Your first instinct may be to begin a standard elimination diet. You may be tempted to remove all foods which appear to be causing the eczema. Please don't; instead, take all your evidence to your health care provider. Discuss your findings with her. Let her help to advise you in the best way to go about doing so. She may even recommend that you discuss a new diet for your infant with a registered dietician or nutritionist.

Eczema-Healing Foods

Just like there's a list of foods that has the potential to help your eczema, there's a similar list for your infant. One of the most helpful nutrients for your baby is the addition of adequate fatty acids, which as previously stated does wonders for the immune system and overall health.

Specifically, the fatty acids most recommended for your child are Omega 3 and Omega 6. These are called "essential" fatty acids. That means that your body need them, but is incapable of manufacturing them. So, it's "essential" that you receive these nutrients from your diet. When you don't, you – and your child, in this case – may develop health problems.

Not only does your body need an abundance of these two acids, but it also requires the proper balance of the two in order to assist your body in reaching its peak function.

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How Chinese Medicine Views Eczema

In the past, Western Medicine has preferred to dismiss the Chinese approach to medicine. Talk of yang, yin and chi created a mystical atmosphere around the practice which seemed inappropriate to the scientifically, fact-based study of medicine in the West.

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But increasingly, the medical community and the Western population at large are paying closer attention to this ancient practice, and with good reason. Research is now confirming what millions of Chinese knew all along: it works.

Not only that, but Western medicine is now beginning to understand why it works. It appears for all of its different—and sometimes exotic – labeling, Chinese medicine is grounded in the same basic principles as Western medicine.

That being said, it's important to know what Chinese medicine has to say about the incidence of eczema in infants.

Infant eczema usually appears either at birth or within the first few weeks of life. This corresponds with the period Chinese medicine refers to as the water element and the kidney zang. In the Oriental view, the source of life is what's referred to as the kidney jing. After 14 years of maturation, it's then known as kidney chi, or energy.

For this reason, Chinese medicine treats the initial symptoms of infant eczema by treating the kidneys. Very often, the triggers for this disorder may be the introduction of cow's milk into the diet, or your baby's first vaccination.

Chinese medicine talks about this in terms that we're not familiar with (that's the reason why Western medicine balked at this reasoning for so long). This practice claims that cow's milk introduces an accumulation of phlegm into the body. Similarly, the first vaccination introduces heat toxins into your child's system.

Believe it or not, the accumulation of phlegm has a direct relationship to eczema. Conventional Western medicine recognizes (but doesn't fully understand) the close relationship and incidence of eczema and a family history of asthma and hay fever.

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Skin Asthma

Chinese medicine offers an explanation. In the East, eczema is very often called "skin asthma." At first, this term seems strange. But considering association of eczema and asthma, it makes sense. The other factor is that some statistics show that a minimum of 50 percent of individuals with eczema eventually develop asthma as well.

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Here's how the Chinese practice explains it. Chinese medicine classifies the skin as part of what is called the lung zang. Remember- the introduction of cow's milk results in an accumulation of phlegm. Even in Western medicine this link is widely recognized.

According to this practice, phlegm is also related to the spleen. Because of this, phlegm has the potential to obstruct the flow of breath to the lungs. But that's not where this obstruction ends. In turn, it's also possible that this blockage prevents the proper blood flow to your child's skin.

This explanation is needed in order to understand Chinese medicine's thinking regarding the use of corticosteroids, one of the first lines of defense in terms of Western treatment. If used as a long-term remedy, steroids actually may do more harm than good.

Steroids deplete energy coming from the kidneys, which pushes the phlegm and heat toxins back into the lungs. Chinese medicine views the use of steroids as an emergency-only treatment, to be used for extremely short periods of time.

So What Does Chinese Medicine Recommend?

Before reaching for any steroid cream, the wisdom of ancient Chinese medicine advises you to take a few practical steps to treating your baby's eczema symptoms.

First, attempt to identify and eliminate the triggers causing the symptoms. Prevention is more beneficial than attempting to treat it later – even with the mildest, most harmless of remedies.

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It may be difficult to do so, because any number of items may trigger an eczema episode: grass, dust, exposure to pets, air pollution, drugs, perfume and foods. Let's face it. You're going to do the best you can, but you can't have your baby to live in a protective bubble.

Keep your child's skin hydrated. Soothing baths should be routine for him. Apply moisturizers frequently and make sure they're fragrance free.

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Dress your child in soft cotton fabrics instead of synthetics whenever possible. Also avoid wool. If you live in a cold climate, you may instinctively dress your child in wool or a wool blend. This, however, only contributes to the skin irritation.

Breast milk, according to Chinese medicine, is the best source of nutrition (Western medicine also confirms this because of its high fatty-acid content). If you can't breast feed, try introducing goat's milk. When it comes to older children, try using almond milk, especially in cereal. (I use this myself and love it!)

Acupuncture For My Child?

Let's preface this by stating unequivocally that acupuncture doesn't hurt. If you fear this remedy because you think it may be painful for your child, don't worry.

And it's effective. Some acupuncturists say they've seen success stories in which eczema symptoms have been reduced by fifty percent within the first session. These same individuals have gone on to need less than two months of treatments to regain clear skin.

Realistically, it may take anywhere from three sessions to three months to achieve healing.

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Conclusion

Why yes! You CAN be in control of your own health. You see, it really isn't as difficult as you may have expected. You may have hesitated at first or even have been intimidated about taking control of your eczema.

Your doctor – depending on his clinical orientation – may have discouraged you from doing this. But as you can see, it's not as risky as you may have thought. In fact, the remedies, suggestions and guidelines presented here are without a doubt far less risky than some of his prescriptive recommendations.

Certainly the herbs, diet and lifestyle changes presented here are free of severe side effects like those you could develop using steroids or even antihistamines.

If, after reading this book, you're still not quite sure whether these remedies could help, then start slow. Try only one; but pay close attention. Don't credit the improvement you do see to mere coincidence or a fluke in your condition.

More than likely it isn't. If you use a remedy and discover it works, then give it the credit its due. And keep using it. You'll be totally amazed that it works without causing you any continued, serious side effects.

Now is the time to take control of your health – to take control of your life. If not now, when? You can't afford to wait a minute longer.

Go out and live the life you were meant to live!

Appendix I: Glossary

Allergens: Substances foreign to your body that are responsible for allergic reactions. These can be plant pollens, animal dander, some foods, dust mites, antibiotics, or other substances like latex and rubber. Even a bite from an insect can be an allergen.

Antihistamine: A type of medication that counteracts histamine, as well as a chemical that your body releases in response to an allergic reaction that causing an inflammation. Examples of manufactured antihistamines include Benadryl and Atarax.

Asthma: A disease affecting your airways that is associated with chronic breathing issues. You may experience acute episodes when your air passages suddenly narrow, making breathing more difficult. Asthma attacks may be prompted by allergens. Other triggers for attacks include cold air, exercise, any bronchial infections.

Atopic dermatitis: Another name for eczema; a chronic, recurring skin disorder characterized by inflammation. It may first appear in infants or young children. For many, it lasts throughout adulthood.

Atopic triad: The name given to a group of three related skin disorders: atopic dermatitis, hay fever (also referred to as allergic rhinitis), and asthma.

Atrophy of the skin: A thinning of the skin.

Borage oil: The pressed seeds of the herb borage, processed into an oil and often used in the natural treatment of eczema.

Chronic: Any condition that persists over a long period of time, as opposed to acute, which occurs once for only a short time.

Coal tar: A byproduct obtained from bituminous coal. It is used by some medical professionals as a remedy to relieve the symptoms of eczema.

Emollient: A substance that softens the skin and makes it more pliant by increasing its hydration. More commonly referred to as a *moisturizer*.

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Evening primrose oil: A product from the seeds of the evening primrose plant, this oil has been used for more than 80 years as a natural treatment for eczema.

Flare or flare-up: The term used to describe a recurrence or worsening of eczema, specifically the itching and redness or inflammation.

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Gamma linoleic acid: An omega-6 fatty acid that is used in the natural treatment of eczema.

Homeopathic remedies: A natural form of treatment based on the theory that "like cures like." According to homeopathy, symptoms are the body's natural reaction to fighting illness. The goal is to stimulate the reactions, not to suppress them as conventional treatment does.

Immunomodulator: A substance that has an effective influence on the immune system; specifically one which is capable of modifying or changing the functions of the immune system.

Inflammation: This is a natural reaction of the human body to any type of injury or abnormal stimulation. The stimulus may be physical, biological or chemical in nature. Inflammation usually appears as pain, itchiness, warmth, redness or loss of function.

Lotion: A blend of oil and water that is used to smooth and soften skin.

Moisturizer: A cream or lotion that softens skin, making it more pliant by increasing its hydration. It is sometimes referred to as an emollient.

Ointment: A semisolid preparation that is clear and greasy. It contains no water and is used topically.

Oral: Any medication, either prescription or over-the-counter, taken by mouth. A pill, tablet or a capsule, for example, is considered an oral treatment.

Oral immunosuppressant: A medication, taken by mouth, which prevents or suppresses an immune system response.

Over-the-counter: A medication for which no doctor-written prescription is necessary. Aspirin, for example, is an over-the-counter medication. Very often, you'll see it abbreviated as OTC.

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Phototherapy (ultraviolet therapy): A form of therapy using ultraviolet light as a form of healing.

Placebo: Pronounced "pla cee boh." It's the use of a substance that looks like a form of medication, but has no active ingredients. Because of this, placebos cannot affect any physiological change. It's used in double-blind controlled studies to test the effectiveness of a medication.

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Probiotics: Substances that promote the growth of good bacteria in the intestines. Probiotics may reduce allergic reactions by improving digestion or by influencing the immune system, or both.

Refractory: A condition which is difficult to manage; one not responding to conventional medical treatments.

Steroid: Shortened form of glucocorticoid steroid that is used as anti-inflammatory therapy in either topical or oral form. Not to be confused with anabolic steroids, which some athletes use for improved performance.

Steroid-free: Any medication that contains no corticosteroids.

Striae: Medical term for stretch marks.

Symptom: Signs and signals which may indicate the presence of a disease or a disorder.

Systemic: Any physical condition which involves the entire body.

T cells: Known as T-lymphocytes, these are a specific classification of white blood cells. Their task is to reject foreign tissue, regulate immunity and control the production of antibodies in order to defend your body from infections.

Topical: Any type of substance applied to the skin.

Triggers: Term used to refer to situations or objects which prompt the creation of a health condition. In terms of eczema, triggers which cause flare-ups would be irritants, exposure to extreme temperature, stress or allergens, to name a few.

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Appendix II: Meals That Cure Eczema

Here's just a taste of what you can expect to enjoy when you embark on your eczema-free diet. You won't need to sacrifice taste or variety in order to eat healthy, without the worry and pain of eczema.

The Ultimate Raspberry Banana Smoothie

Ingredients

1 cup raspberries
1 ripe banana, frozen
1 cup rice milk
1 Tbsp. flaxseed, ground finely

Directions

Place all ingredients in a blender. Mix until smooth. Enjoy! Yep! That's all there is to it.

Dairy-Free Muesli

Ingredients

1 ½ cups rolled oats
½ cup puffed buckwheat
½ cup chopped dried apples
1 cup pears, diced
3 Tbsp brown sugar
2 tsp ground cinnamon
Rice milk for serving

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Directions

Place oats on a nonstick baking sheet. Toast in a preheated oven at 325 degrees for 10 minutes. Stir occasionally.

Allow the oats to cool. Place in a bowl. Add water. Place this mixture overnight in refrigerator.

Add the puffed buckwheat, apples, brown sugar and ground cinnamon. Mix well. Top with pears and grapes.

Crab Appetizer

Ingredients

1 lb cooked crab meat
5 heads Belgium endive, trimmed and separated into spears
2 Tbsp. plain yogurt
1 tsp lemon juice
¼ tsp cayenne pepper
Chives, chopped

Directions

Cut the crab meat into chunks. Mix yogurt, lemon juice, and cayenne pepper into a bowl. Mix it with the crab.

Spoon this mixture on top of the spears of endive. Garnish with chives. Enjoy.

Healthy Guacamole Dip

Ingredients

2 ripe avocados
Tomatoes
Cucumbers
Onions to taste
Juice of 1 lemon
Olive oil, extra virgin
Salt, to test

Directions

Spoon the avocado into a bowl. Cut the cucumber, tomatoes and onion. Add this to the avocado. Salt the mixture according to your taste. Add the lemon juice and the olive oil. Mix. Enjoy!

Butternut Squash Soup

Ingredients

1 ½ lb. butternut squash, peeled, seeded and chopped
1 lb. sweet potato, peeled and chopped
2 cups onion, chopped
¼ lb carrots, cut into 1/2 -inc slices
5 cups vegetable stock
2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
1/8 tsp. nutmeg
1/8 tsp. ground Allspice
¼ tsp. chili powder
1 pinch ground cumin
1 ¼ tsp salt
½ cup pine nuts for garnish

Directions

Warm the olive oil over medium heat. Add onions. Cover, simmer for 5 minutes or until onions are translucent.

Add nutmeg, Allspice, chili powder, and cumin. Sauté for approximately 1 minute. Add squash, sweet potato, carrots and vegetable stock. Bring to a quick boil. Turn heat down; simmer for about 15 to 20 minutes or until veggies are tender.

Toast the pine nuts in a skillet, stirring constantly for about 2 minutes or until they're golden brown. Remove from heat. Set aside. Puree soup. Garnish with pine nuts. Serve hot.

Fennel Salad

Ingredients

1 fennel bulb, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, chopped
2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 Tbsp lemon juice
Parsley or cilantro

Directions

Mix fennel and garlic in a bowl. In a small container, mix the olive oil, lemon juice and parsley. Pour the dressing over the fennel and garlic.

Apple-Accented Chicken Salad

Ingredients

3 cups chicken, cooked and diced
1 cup grapes, halved
½ cup apples, diced
½ cup celery, diced
3 Tbsp. red onion, chopped finely
6 Tbsp. extra light mayonnaise
2 tsp. lemon juice
Lettuce leaves
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Combine chicken, grapes, apples, celery and onion. In a small bowl, mix mayonnaise, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Stir this into the chicken and apple mixture.

Place lettuce leaves on plate. Top with chicken mixture.

Asparagus Stir Fry

Ingredients

2 bundles asparagus, cut into bite-sized pieces
2 oz. dried quinoa
3 tsp. minced fresh ginger
2 cloves garlic, slivered
1 Tbsp soy sauce
3 ½ Tbsp vegetable stock
½ tsp sugar

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Directions

Heat the oil in a wok. Stir fry the ginger and garlic. Add asparagus.

Combine soy sauce, sugar and stock in a small bowl. Pour this over the asparagus. Simmer for about 3 to 5 minutes or until asparagus is tender.

Cook noodles according to package. Serve with asparagus.

Resources

The National Eczema Association

<http://www.nationaleczema.org/>

4460 Redwood Highway Suite 16D

San Rafael, CA 94903-1953

415-499-3474

800-818-7546

Email: info@nationaleczema.org

Pointfinder Acupressure Guide Online

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