

Childhood eczema

Eczema is a blanket term for a variety of skin conditions that present as dry, itchy and inflamed skin. Eczema can be irritating and uncomfortable enough to disrupt daily life. Many people of varying ages suffer with Eczema. A population-based survey of eczema prevalence in the United States found that 17.1% reported at least one of four eczematous symptoms, and empirically defined eczema was found in 10.7%. The authors concluded that most cases are not diagnosed by a physician, which indicates that these conditions are undertreated and/or managed with non-prescription remedies¹. An analysis of the National Survey of Children's Health found the prevalence of childhood eczema was 12.97%, with proportionally higher rates of incidence in the Northeast and Midwestern states compared with the Southern and Western states².

There are a variety of reasons someone may be suffering from eczema. The exact cause of eczema is still under study and debate. There is general agreement that a combination of triggers and genetics relating to immune function may be the cause of an outbreak. Some discussed triggers are topical irritants like soaps, detergents and chafing as well as other non topical triggers like stress, infections and allergies³. Another area of investigation is that liver function may be the underlying cause for eczema. In Tokyo at The Department of Allergy in the National Children's Hospital, researchers conducted a study which concluded that there is a relationship between babies with eczema and liver dysfunction⁴.

Without an exact conclusion to the underlying cause we can still use herbal medicine to soothe and even prevent eczema. We can use herbal medicine in topical ointments and salves to treat topically and use internal applications to encourage healing and to prevent future flare ups.

Topical salves, lotions and ointments including some of the following botanicals can be soothing and promote healing⁵:

- Red clover (*Trifolium pratense*)
- Chickweed (*Stellaria media*)
- St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) external use only
- Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) external use only
- Helichrysum (*Helichrysum angustifolia*)
- Oats (*Avena sativa*)
- Jojoba oil (*Simmondsia*)

Internal herbal teas, decoction and tinctures can help to support the liver, immune system and healing and soothing skin ailments such as eczema. Some herbs that make healthful skin healers are as follows⁶:

- Burdock (*Arctium lappa*) supports and cleanses the kidneys and liver which aids the body in clearing skin conditions.

- Hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) is rich in antioxidants which supports the immune system and aids the body in healing skin ailments.
- Red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) is a blood cleansing herb which helps to heal and clear the skin.
- Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) rich in vital Nutrients and supports proper immune function.

Additional general lifestyle approaches to avoiding or reducing the severity of eczema:

- Reduce stress
- Drink a sufficient amount of water
- Consume a balanced diet avoiding major allergens and processed foods.
- Clean and nourish the body in natural and Gentle soaps and skin care
- Wash laundry in natural and allergen free detergents
- Soak in oatmeal and herbal baths
- Have allergy testing if allergies are suspected

Please remember to always consult with your health care provider before using herbs to treat any specific illness or disease. Remember to discuss any medications you are currently taking before taking any herbs.

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- 1) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/m/pubmed/17498413/>
- 2) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4118692/>
- 3) <https://nationaleczema.org/eczema/causes-and-triggers-of-eczema/>
- 4) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1444818>
- 5,6) Herbs for Children, Demetria Clark, Heart of Herbs Herbal School
www.heartofherbs.com