Finding Ways to Manage Your Eczema Through Dieting

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An Eczema Diet Can Help Curb Flare-Ups

Do you or your children suffer from eczema? Are you looking for alternative ways to help manage your eczema flare-ups? One place to begin is your diet! You may not be aware, but certain foods can cause eczema or make it worse. The adage is indeed true: you are what you eat! Following an eczema diet may sound daunting, but it's simple.

As an eczema sufferer myself, and as the mother of a toddler who has eczema, I was intrigued to find out that certain foods can trigger eczema. Curious as to what they are? Read on to learn more.

Finding the Right Eczema Diet

No one diet fits all. There are many types of eczema so a diet that works for one person may not work for you. However, if you are looking for a diet for eczema in general, your best bet is a diet that contains foods that fight inflammation.

Why? Eczema is an inflammatory reaction of the skin, so if you follow a diet that contains foods that fight inflammation, your symptoms may improve.

The Role of Various Foods in Fighting or Promoting Inflammation

Various parts of your diet can either promote or fight inflammation. Take various dietary fats for example. Trans fats promote inflammation, which may make your eczema worse. Trans fats are usually put in processed foods to increase their shelf life. These foods include some margarine, frozen pizza, microwave popcorn, and ready-to-use refrigerated dough products, such as biscuits.

Likewise, too much omega-6 promotes inflammation. Omega-3s, on the other hand, fight inflammation. How much omega-6 is too much? You ideally want your ratio of omega-6s to omega-3s to be 6:1. Anything more than this promotes inflammation. Unfortunately, the ratio of omega-6s to omega-3s in North Americans tends to be higher. This places our bodies in states of chronic inflammation.

What foods contain omega-6 and what foods contain omega-3? Omega-6s are found in vegetable oils such as canola, corn, sunflower, soybean, and safflower oil. Omega-3s are found in oily fishes such as salmon, mackerel, herring, sardines, and tuna. Omega 3s are also found in flaxseeds, walnuts, and butternuts.

Other fats that fight inflammation are monounsaturated fats which are found in olive oil and avocados.

Other foods that fight inflammation include whole grains, fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes. These foods contain antioxidants that fight inflammation. Other foods that promote inflammation include sweets and other desserts. These foods contain inflammation-promoting sugar or high-fructose corn syrup.

Diets That Fight Inflammation

If you're looking for a diet to help inflammation related to eczema, the following suggested diets for eczema may help.

The Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet is one diet that can help fight inflammation. Research has shown that, compared to the typical Western diet, the Mediterranean diet fights inflammation rather than promoting it. What's more, research has shown that kids who consume a Mediterranean diet are less likely to develop eczema than kids who consume a Western diet.

Foods to eat on the Mediterranean diet:

- Whole grains, fresh fruits and veggies, nuts, and legumes
- Fish and seafood
- Olive oil as your main source of fat

Foods to avoid or to eat in small quantities while on the Mediterranean diet:

- Red meats, especially grain-fed meat.
- Sweets and other desserts.
- Vegetable oils.
- Eggs.
- Butter.
- Highly processed foods.
- Refined carbohydrates.

Dyshidrotic Diet

If you suffer from dyshidrotic eczema, you may want to try the dyshidrotic diet. Dyshidrotic eczema is a type of eczema that causes tiny, itchy blisters on your fingers, toes, palms, and the soles of your feet.

Nickel and cobalt in everyday objects, including foods, can trigger flare-ups. As a result, if you have this type of eczema, you will want to avoid foods that contain nickel and cobalt.

Foods to avoid while on the dyshidrotic diet:

- Cocoa.
- Chocolate.
- Soybeans.
- Oatmeal.
- Whole wheat.
- Rye.
- Oats.
- Nuts.
- Almonds.
- Fresh and dried legumes.
- Canned foods.
- Clams.
- Fish.
- Leafy green vegetables.
- Liver.
- Milk.
- Oysters.

- Red meat.

You should also stock up on foods that contain lots of vitamin C and iron, as they can help reduce the absorption of nickel and cobalt. Good sources of vitamin C include fruits and vegetables such as oranges, kiwis, and bell peppers. Good sources of iron that are low in zinc and nickel include poultry, eggs, and dried fruits.

Elimination Diet

If you have atopic dermatitis (a form of eczema) and a confirmed food allergy, an elimination diet may improve your eczema. What is atopic dermatitis? Atopic dermatitis is a form of eczema in which dark, scaly patches appear on your scalp, forehead, and face.

Gluten-free Diets

With the elimination diet, you want to remove your food allergens from your diet for a few days to see if your eczema clears up. If you are treating your child with this diet, and the diet helps clear up their eczema, you will eventually want to reintroduce the food allergens in a year or two to see if eczema flares up again. This is because most children outgrow food allergies (except peanuts and tree nuts). Hence, children may not need to be on an elimination diet for life.

Gluten-free diets can improve your eczema if you have Celiac disease or gluten sensitivity.

Foods to avoid on the gluten-free diet:

- Wheat.
- Rye.
- Barley.
- Triticale.
- Malt.
- Brewer’s Yeast.
- Wheat starch.

Foods to eat on the gluten-free diet:

- Gluten-free grains and starches such as rice, cassava, soy, quinoa, millet, and amaranth.
- Fruits.
- Vegetables.
- Meat and poultry.
- Fish and seafood.
- Dairy.
- Beans, legumes and nuts.

Final Thoughts

Successful eczema diets will vary between people because no two individuals are the same. What works for one person may not work for another.

No one diet fits all forms of eczema. However, a good rule of thumb is to follow an anti-inflammatory diet such as the Mediterranean diet to help prevent eczema flare-ups. If you have certain forms of eczema, several diets may stave your symptoms.