Debunking Misconceptions About Eczema and Contagion

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Clarity Amidst Confusion

Having a skin affliction like eczema is worse than the itching and discomfort it causes. That's because, unlike other chronic ailments, eczema can be highly visible – something those who live with it know can be frustrating and embarrassing at the same time.

It's not only because eczema can appear unattractive. For those not familiar with the condition, red and scaly skin might imply a contagious rash or the presence of a caustic chemical. Either way, they might treat someone living with eczema differently than they would another person.

Worse than simply living with eczema day-to-day can be dealing with so many people who have the wrong ideas about the ailment. It might cause a lack of understanding, avoidance, or worse, poor medical advice, which some may take seriously.

There are plenty of myths and misconceptions about eczema, including how contagious it is (if at all). Whether you have eczema or know someone who does, it's important to have an accurate picture of what it's like to live with it. So let's dispel all the myths surrounding eczema. Here's what you need to know about eczema.

Misconception 1: Is Eczema Contagious?

So, is eczema contagious? Nope, it's not contagious at all!

Surprisingly, little is known about the specific cause or causes of eczema, but we do know it's caused (or triggered) by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. While you need the gene to ever get eczema, allergens and other factors can trigger a flare-up.

This is a particularly harmful misconception because of the social consequences it involves. If people believe they can catch eczema from you, they may treat you differently or avoid you altogether. It's very important to dispel this once and for all – eczema is not contagious.

If you're not prone to eczema through your genetics, you simply won't be able to catch it from someone else. This includes direct physical contact with the rash, even if the skin is raised or broken. So fear not!

Misconception 2: Your Emotional State Can Cause Eczema

Similar to the previous myth about eczema being contagious, some people are under the impression that eczema can be caused by feeling anxious or stressed. While this is largely false (again, without the genetic predisposition, eczema can't be caught, even if you're stressed), there is a kernel of truth to this myth.

Like an allergy, there is some evidence to suggest a negative emotional state like anxiety or stress can trigger an

eczema flare-up. If you are prone to eczema, it is a good idea to find emotional coping mechanisms to mitigate your skin reactions (and benefit your mental health, too.)

Misconception 3: Eczema in Your Genes Guarantees You'll Have It

As we mentioned above – eczema is, in fact, a genetic-influenced condition and having a history of it in your family certainly increases your chances of having it. But with most hereditary illnesses, nothing is for sure when inheriting eczema. It's entirely possible that even if you have eczema, you won't pass it along to your child.

Plus, there's always the option you grow out of it. While infant eczema is pretty common, rates of adult occurrences drop significantly. So even if you have the gene and had it as a baby, it's not certain you'll even display symptoms into adolescence.

And here's another thing, when it comes to infants, even if they are genetically inclined towards eczema, studies indicate you can help mitigate or, altogether, halt its appearance in babies through the regular application of moisturizer. Luckily, the myth that eczema is a genetic guarantee is easily proven false.

Misconception 4: You Can Cure Your Eczema

Unfortunately, one of the worst parts of having eczema is that you'll always have it. That's not to say it will always be raised, red and itchy; flare-ups may one day be a fairly rare occurrence for you. But with the right trigger or environmental factors, your eczema will always be there to pop up.

Despite this, there are dozens of purported cures and home remedies for eczema you can find online. Few, if any, have any merit, as they claim to cure your eczema is a downright lie. There are many more treatments for the symptoms of eczema, however, and these may have varying degrees of effectiveness. For most, a simple moisturizer applied regularly will be the best way to prevent and mitigate flare-ups when they occur.

Misconception 5: Eczema is Primarily an Aesthetic Concern

One of the worst parts of eczema is the raised, red rash that accompanies a flare-up. It's not a pretty sight, as anyone afflicted with it would attest to it. But compared to the intense itching, pain and scarring that accompanies it, how your eczema looks is probably the least of your concerns.

For people who don't have a skin condition, it might seem like your primary concern about eczema is how to conceal it. They might not take into account the sleepless nights or the constant aggravation it can cause during a nasty flare-up. This misconception inhibits the appropriate empathy you deserve when dealing with your eczema, which is why it is important to dispel.

The Takeaway

There are a lot of myths and misconceptions about eczema, as anyone who has it probably knows. The most pervasive one seems to be, "Is eczema contagious?", which you can confidently answer, "No, it's actually not, and here's why it isn't" too. That said, there are plenty of lesser-known eczema myths that also need to be dispelled, but we'll come back to that at another time.

Whether it's underestimating how impactful eczema can be on the lives of those who cope with it or buying into ridiculous and ineffectual "cures," these misconceptions can take a toll on the lives of those who live with this skin condition. The best way to combat them is to encourage proper information and take the time to appropriately educate when the opportunity arises.