6 Lifestyle Changes to Help You Manage Eczema

by AILEEN BARRO

Eczema Lifestyle Changes

Eczema is a common and troublesome skin disease affecting up to 20% of all infants and young children. While the disease will improve as the children grow up, roughly between the ages of 5 and 15, others will have some form of eczema throughout their lives. Did you know that some factors that affect the severity of eczema are within your control? Let's discuss the eczema lifestyle changes that you can make to relieve symptoms and prevent flares.

Eczema Lifestyle Changes to Prevent Flare-Ups

Several studies have shown that the worldwide prevalence of eczema has increased in the past decades, but scientists are not sure why. To be able to prevent eczema flare-up, it is important to consider your total life situation. It's not enough to just focus on the usual triggers. Sometimes a few changes here and there will help you manage the disease better.

1. Always Keep Your Skin Moisturized

Eczema sufferers have inherently dry skin. Keeping your skin hydrated may help keep flare-ups at bay. Emollients or moisturizers are the foundation of eczema therapy. Unless you adopt a skincare regimen that includes soothing creams, lotions and wet wraps, it can be difficult to fight the disease 100%.

2. Learn Coping Strategies to Reduce Stress

Chronic stress can wreak havoc on your overall health. Since it is impossible to avoid stressful situations at all times, you should learn some coping skills to manage your stress. In your free time, do things you enjoy the most, whether it is dancing, reading poetry books, painting or hanging out with friends. Engaging in moderate physical activities is a good way to manage stress. The link between the pleasure-boosting chemical called endorphins and exercise is real!

3. Eat This, Not That!

If you are one of those people who experience flare-ups when they eat a certain food, you already know what to avoid. However, eliminating this food from your diet can cause nutritional deficiencies in the long run, particularly to a growing child. Consult your doctor before removing food from your child's diet.

Can food cure eczema? We wish! Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that anti-inflammatory foods can totally prevent flare-ups. It doesn't mean you shouldn't try them though. They are healthy and nutritious on their own and may reduce symptoms in some people. Here are some foods to try:

- Fish that are high in omega-3s.

- Green, black or oolong tea.
- Fruits and vegetables rich in flavonoids (broccoli, cherries, kale and spinach).
- Yogurt and other fermented products.

4. Choose the Right Clothing

Certain types of fabric can cause flare-ups. Fabrics with scratchy textures, including wool, spandex and polyester can create an urge to scratch. Wear soft clothes made of natural and breathable fabrics, like cotton, linen and silk. Synthetic fabrics containing dyes and other chemical additives can irritate the skin and make itching worse.

5. Trim Your Nails

Constant scratching or rubbing may turn your rash into a dark, thickened, leather-like patch of skin. Chronic itching in eczema is hard to treat. Make sure to keep your fingernails short to minimize the damage caused by scratching. Of course, avoid products and substances that make itching worse.

6. Get Adequate Sleep

Getting a good night's sleep is beneficial for eczema because it lowers stress. But faced with a persistent itch, adequate sleep is quite a remarkable feat. To get a better handle of your symptoms, ask your doctor for prescription medications such as an antihistamine. This drug can make you drowsy, so it's best to take it before bed.

Causes and Triggers

You'll be best equipped to fight flare-ups if you know what triggers your eczema. There are several factors that contribute to the severity of the disease; the tricky part is that it varies from person to person.

Stress

Many chronic medical conditions and stress are interconnected in a vicious cycle. Stress worsens eczema and persistent eczema increases stress. People often report that their condition is affected by different moods, particularly in conflicting or stressful situations.

Skin Dryness

Dry skin is a common consequence of eczema but can also exacerbate eczema symptoms. A broken skin barrier makes the skin unable to retain water. Low humidity also increases water loss in the skin, resulting in dryness and skin irritation.

Allergens

Exposure to airborne substances (aeroallergens) has long been found to trigger flare-ups. Pollen, animal dander, dust mites and fungal spores are some of the most common allergens for eczema.

Irritants

Everyday products and even natural substances you come into contact with can affect eczema. For instance, workers who are constantly exposed to detergents, harsh soap and other cleaning products may develop hand eczema. To some people, certain metals, fragrances, fabric (wool or polyester), dyes, lotions, shampoos and even temporary tattoos can cause eczema to a flare.

Infection

Our skin is naturally inhabited by a community of microorganisms (bacteria, fungi and viruses) that do not usually

cause any harm. However, when the skin barrier is damaged, exposure to certain bacteria can cause problems. It has been found that patients with eczema have high levels of staphylococcus aureus bacteria in the skin. These toxin-producing bacteria can induce the release of a protein that causes inflammation.

Dietary Habits

While eczema is not a food allergy per se, certain food can provoke an attack or make the symptoms worse. The types of food that are responsible for the majority of eczema reactions include chicken eggs, cow’s milk, peanuts, fish and shellfish, soy and wheat. Breastfeeding is said to have a preventive effect on children predisposed to atopic dermatitis.