

Review Article

Eczema and Homeopathy

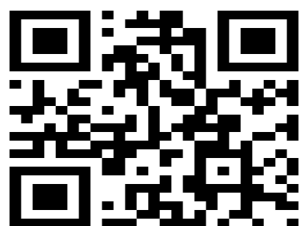
Nilesh Chimane and Deotalu Bharti Suresh

Shri Bhagwan Homoeopathic Medical College and P.G. Institute, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India-431001

ABSTRACT

It is normal that one can experience an itch once in a while, but, when the itch is frequent and causes irritation to the skin, it progresses to eczema. Eczema, also known as dermatitis, is regarded as a condition where the patient experiences inflammation of the skin, which is characterised by itching, redness and an outbreak of lesions. Worldwide, about 20 per cent children and up to 3 per cent adults have some form of eczema. It is frequently observed in infants. Among infants, eczema generally tends to disappear by the age of three, but it may continue into adulthood for a few patients. Eczema isn't just a painful, chronic problem; for many, it is a major health burden and a big drain on the quality of life. If the skin is not properly managed and cared for, the disease may flare up, resulting in significant itching and discomfort. Homeopathy improves eczema through oral medicines and treats it without any side-effects. Also, homeopathic medicines are non-toxic and non-habit forming.

Keywords: Eczema, dermatitis, homeopathy



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Address for Correspondence:

Nilesh Chimane

Shri Bhagwan Homoeopathic Medical College and P.G. Institute, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India-431001

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INTRODUCTION

Eczema is a pruritic vesicular dermatitis characterized early by erythema, edema associated with serous exudates in the epidermis and an infiltrate in dermis, oozing and vesiculation and crusting and scaling and later by thickening, signs of excoriations then altered pigmentation.

The word eczema comes from the Greek word ekzein meaning "to boil out"; the Greek word ek means "out," while the Greek word zema means "boiling."

The terms Dermatitis and Eczema are often used as synonyms, but the term Eczema is preferably used for Exudative Eczema.

The most common type of eczema that is atopic dermatitis, resembles an allergy. But the skin irritation, which is more often seen in children rather than adults, is not an allergic reaction.

The current thinking is that eczema is caused by a combination of factors that include:

- 1) Genetics,
- 2) Abnormal function of the immune system,
- 3) Environment

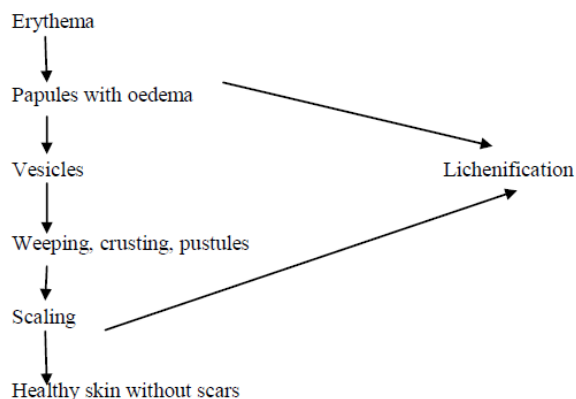
Activities that may cause skin to be more sensitive

Defects in the skin barrier

Definition: Eczema is defined as an inflammation of the epidermis and the superficial layer of the dermis, caused by a wide range of external and internal factors, resulting in redness, itching, swelling, scaling, oozing and formation of clustered papulo vesicles.

Eczema is a specific type of allergic cutaneous manifestation of antigen-antibody reaction. It is characterized by superficial inflammatory oedema of the epidermis associated with vesicle formation.

The natural history of eczema is diagrammatically represented as follows:



Cause:

Basically two factors cause eczema-firstly, an allergic or a sensitive skin. Secondly, exposure to irritant. General predisposing causes are- Age, Familial predisposition
 Irritants- Physical, chemical or electrical
 Sensitizers- Plants, cosmetics, clothing, medicaments and occupational hazards.
 External infections- Streptococci, staphylococci, fungus, etc.
 Internal septic focus shedding toxins or causing bacteraemia.
 Mental and emotional conflicts, strains and stresses.
 Diet and state of digestion.
 Diathesis- Allergic, Xerodermic, Hyperhidrotic or Intense itching. seborrhoeic.
 Drugs- Given for the disease or otherwise
 State of local or general nutrition.
 Climate- Temperature and humidity.

Types:

A] Depending upon the clinical manifestations eczema can be subdivided into the following three stages:-

- 1) Acute eczema – It represents wet dermatitis characterized by intense pruritus, erythema, oedema, papules, vesicles, oozing, crusting and even blister formation.
- 2) Subacute eczema- It is characterized by diffuse erythema, oedema and scaling. In this stage, oedema, vesiculating and oozing components come down. The lesions start scaling.
- 3) Chronic eczema- It is represented by severe itching, hyperkeratosis and lichenification (thickening, hyper- pigmentation and accentuated skin markings.)

B] Depending on etiology:-

1) Endogenous Eczema-In this type of eczema, the course of the problem arises mainly from the patients inherent constitutional factors and partly due to the superimposed environmental factors.

2) Exogenous Eczema- When the patient develops eczema as a result of the exposure of the patient’s skin to environmental noxious agents.

3) combined Eczema- Some eczema may have an exogenous as well as endogenous component.

Eczematous disorders are classified according to the etiology as follows:-**Endogenous Eczema :-**

- Atopic dermatitis
- Seborrhoeic dermatitis
- Nummular eczema
- Pompholyx (dyshidrotic eczema)
- Asteatotic eczema
- Stasis dermatitis
- Juvenile planter dermatitis
- Lichen simplex chronicus

Exogenous Eczema :-

- Irritant contact dermatitis
- Allergic contact dermatitis
- Photodermatitis
- Infectious eczematoid dermatitis.

Histopathology:-

In the ‘acute stage’ of this condition one finds interstitial epidermal oedema called as spongiosis, which leads to stretching and eventual rupture of the intercellular attachments, with the formation of microvesicles. There is also a variable infiltration of epidermis and superficial dermis by lymphocytes.

In the ‘subacute stage’ there is less of spongiosis and more of thickening of the stratum malpighii (termed as acanthosis), and parakeratosis, with the formation of a horny layer.

In the ‘chronic stage’ there is marked acanthosis with elongation and broadening of rete ridges and hyperkeratosis. There is then more of Lichenification.

Vascular dilatation in the dermis is marked in all stages, where especially the papillary vessels are involved.

In chronic stages with Lichenification, the vessels may become tortuous.

Signs and symptoms of eczema:-

Eczema is many sided disease but for purpose of study four elementary varieties, the erythematous, the popular, the vesicular and pustular are recognized. These lesions constitute the peculiar type which may remain distinctive, or at least predominate throughout the course of the disease, through the secondary forms, such as eczema rubrum, eczema squamosum and eczema fissum, may develop.

Atopic dermatitis commonly manifests itself in infants with dry and scaly patches appearing on the skin. These patches are often intensely itchy. The symptoms of atopic dermatitis can vary,

depending on the age of the person with the condition.

Most people develop atopic dermatitis before the age of 5.6 Half of people who develop the condition in childhood continue to have symptoms of it as an adult, though these symptoms are often different to those experienced by children.

People with the condition will often experience periods of time where their symptoms will flare up or worsen, followed by periods of time where their symptoms will improve.

Infants:

Rashes commonly appear on scalp and cheeks.

Rashes can bubble up before weeping fluid.

Rashes can cause extreme itchiness, which may lead to trouble sleeping. Continuous rubbing and scratching can lead to skin infections.

Children, from 2 years old to puberty:

Rashes commonly appear behind the creases of elbows or knees

Also common on neck, wrists, ankles, crease between buttock and legs.

Over time, the following symptoms can manifest:

Rashes can become bumpy, like goosebumps

Rashes can lighten or darken in color

Rashes can thicken (also known as lichenification) and then develop knots and a permanent itch.

Adults:

Rashes commonly appear increases of elbows or knees or nape of neck

Rashes cover much of the body

Rashes can be especially prominent on neck, face and around the eyes

Rashes can cause very dry skin

Rashes can be permanently itchy

Rashes can cause scaly skin

Rashes can lead to skin infections.

Skin features associated with dermatitis:

Atopic pleat - an extra fold of skin that develops under the eye

Cheilitis - inflammation of the skin on and around the lips

Hyperlinear palms - increased number of skin creases on the palms

Hyperpigmented eyelids - eyelids that have become darker in color, from inflammation or hay fever

Lichenification - thick, leathery skin resulting from constant scratching and rubbing

Papules- small raised bumps that may open when scratched and become crusty and infected

Urticaria .

Differential diagnosis-

Pityriasis Rosea`

Psoriasis

Tinea corporis

INVESTIGATION:

Laboratory tests and skin tests-

Patch Testing

Photopatch Testing

Prick Testing

Serological Testing-Total serum IgE, specific IgE Antibody.

Skin Biopsy.

Complications:

The skin of people with dermatitis lacks infection-fighting proteins, making them susceptible to skin infections caused by bacteria and viruses. Fungal infections also are common in people with dermatitis.

1 Bacterial infections: Staphylococcus aureus bacteria most common..

2 Viral infections:-People with atopic dermatitis are highly vulnerable to certain viral infections of the skin. For example, if infected with herpes simplex virus, they can develop a severe skin condition called atopic dermatitis with eczema herpeticum.

Papillomavirus and molluscum contagiosum may be encouraged by use of local corticosteroids.

3 Irritant reactions-

Defective barrier function sleep disturbance

-loss of schooling and behavioural difficulties.

4 Food allergy--

Eggs, cow's milk, protein, fish, wheat, and soya may cause immediate urticarial eruption rather than exacerbation of Eczema.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT fo Eczema/ Dermatitis

•Reassurance.

•Identify offending agent.

•Early removal from offending agent.

•Avoid contact.

•Maintain personal hygiene.

•Maintain electrolyte balance.

•Avoid scratching.

• Adequate physical & mental rest.

HOMOEOPATHIC TREATMENT

REPERTORY

KENT- SKIN- ERUPTIONS- ECZEMA.

Homeopathic Remedies

Antimonium Crudum

It is often indicated eczematous eruptions, when there are thick, horny callosities in the skin. For children and young people inclined to grow fat; for the extremes of life. Old people with morning diarrhea, suddenly become constipated,or alternate diarrhea and constipation; pulse hard and rapid. Sensitive to

the cold < after taking cold. Child is fretful, peevish, cannot bear to be touched or looked at; sulky, does not wish to speak or be spoken to; angry at every little attention. Great sadness, with weeping. Loathing life. Anxious lachrymose mood, the slightest thing effects her; abject despair, suicide by drowning. Irresistible desire to talk in rhymes or repeat verses.

Arsenicum

It is a valuable remedy in Eczema, when vesicles appear, which turn into pustules and for scabs, with copious scaling and much burning. Great Prostration, with rapid sinking of the vital forces; fainting. The disposition is:

- a. Depression, melancholy, despairing, indifferent.
- b. Anxious, fearful, restless, full of anguish.
- c. Irritable, sensitive, peevish, easily vexed.

The greater the suffering the greater the anguish, restlessness and fear of death. Mentally restless, but physically too weak to move.

Calcarea Carb

It is indicated in the Eczema of the children, when it appears on the scalp, with a tendency to spread downwards and over the face. Frequently it appears in patches on the face or scalp, forming thick crusts, which are often white, like chalk deposits.

Leucophlegmatic, blond hair, light complexion, blue eyes, fair skin; tendency to obesity in youth. Psoric constitutions; pale, weak, timid, easily tired when walking. Disposed to grow fat, corpulent, unwieldy. Children with red face, flabby muscles, who sweat easily and take cold readily in consequence. Large heads and abdomens; fontanelles and sutures open; bones soft, develop very slowly. Curvature of bones, especially spine and long bones; extremities crooked, deformed; bones irregularly developed. Head sweats profusely while sleeping, wetting pillow far around.

Graphites

Very useful in Eczema, which looks very much like that of Ars., but with rough skin and oozing of a glutinous fluid. Eczematous eruption appears about the eyes, on the cheeks, on and behind the ears, on the top of the head and down the occiput; it may also be scattered here and there over the surface of the body, particularly in the bends of the joints. "Excessive cautiousness; timid, hesitates; unable to decide about anything. Fidgety while sitting at work. Sad, despondent; music makes her weep; thinks of nothing but death. Eczema of lids; eruption moist and fissured; lids red and margins covered with scales or crusts.

Hepar sulph.

It is called for in eczematous eruptions, which have a purulent discharge, and are accompanied by itching.

For torpid lymphatic constitutions; persons with light hair and complexion, slow to act, muscles soft and flabby. The slightest injury causes suppuration. Diseases where the system has been injured by the abuse of Mercury. In diseases where suppuration seems inevitable, Hepar may open the abscess and hasten the cure. Oversensitive, physically and mentally; the slightest cause irritates him; quick, hasty speech and hasty drinking. Patient is peevish, angry at the least trifle; hypochondriacal; unreasonably anxious. Extremely sensitive to cold air, imagines he can feel the air if a door is opened in the next room; must be wrapped up to the face even in hot weather; cannot bear to be uncovered.

Mercurius

It is useful when the Itch has been complicated with pustulous and eczematous eruptions. Best adapted for light-haired persons; skin and muscles lax. In bone diseases, pain worse at night; glandular swellings with or without suppuration, but especially if suppuration be too profuse. Cold swellings; abscesses, slow to suppurate. Profuse perspiration attends nearly every complaint, but does not relieve; may even increase the suffering. Great weakness and trembling from least exertion.

Mezereum

It is useful esp. in scrofulous cases, when hard, thick, chalky crusts form, which crack and ooze copiously of pus. Itching is more intense at night, when the patient is warmly wrapped up. Sometimes pimples surround the main seat of the disease. It should be compared with Rhus Tox.

For light-haired, irresolute persons of a phlegmatic temperament. Eczema and itching eruptions after vaccination. Hypochondriacal and despondent; indifferent to everything and everyone; angry at trifles and perfectly harmless things, but is soon sorry for it.

Natrum Muriaticum

It called for in an Eczema, which appears in thick scabs, oozing pus and matting the hair together, a crusta lactea, in fact. Scaly eruptions on flexor surfaces and the bends of joints. For the anaemic and cachectic, whether from lots of vital fluids – profuse menses, seminal losses or mental affections. Great emaciation; losing flesh while living well ; throat and neck of children emaciate rapidly during summer

complaint . Great liability to take cold. Irritability: child cross when spoken to; crying from slightest cause; gets into a passion about trifles, especially when consoled with. Awkward, hasty, drops things from nervous weakness. Marked disposition to weep; sad weeping mood, without cause, but consolation from others <. her troubles.

Petroleum

An excellent remedy for Eczema, wherever it may appear, forming thick scabs and oozing pus. The skin soon grows more harsh and dry and there form deep cracks and fissures which bleed and suppurate.

Adapted to persons with light hair and skin; irritable, quarrelsome disposition; easily offended at trifles; vexed at everything. Ailments: from riding in a carriage, railroad car, or in a ship. Ailments which are worse before and during a thunderstorm. Symptoms appear and disappear rapidly

Psorinum

A scaly dirty-looking eruption with itching, worse from the warmth of the bed. Especially adapted to the psoric constitution. In chronic cases when well selected remedies fail to relieve or permanently improve. Body has a filthy smell even after bathing. The whole body painful, easily sprained and injured. Great sensitiveness to cold air or change of weather.

Ranunculus Bulbosus.

It may be used in Eczema, attended with thickening of the skin and formation of hard, horny scabs. One of our most effective remedies for the bad effects of alcoholic beverages; spasmodic hiccough; delirium tremens.

Rhus Tox

It is useful in Eczema, when hard, thick chalky crusts form, which crack and ooze copious pus. Adapted to persons of rheumatic diathesis; bad effects of getting wet, especially after being over-heated.

Staphysagria

It may be used in eczematous eruption on any part of the body, but esp. apt to be found on the head and face; the eruption is usually dry and formed of very thick scabs and itches violently; when scratching stops the itching in one place, it goes to another. At other times, these scabs are moist and yellowish in color and very offensive.

Sulphur

Eczema rubrum. Gouty eczema with much oozing. Skin dry, rough, scaly, voluptuous itching _ “feels so good to scratch Itching in skin, even of whole body, worse at night, or in

morning, in bed, and often with pain as of excoriation, heat, itching (soreness), or bleeding of the part which has been scratched. Adapted to persons of a scrofulous diathesis, subject to venous congestion; especially of portal system. Persons of nervous temperament, quick motioned, quick tempered, plethoric, skin excessively sensitive to atmospheric changes. For lean, stoop shouldered persons who walk and sit stooping like old men. Standing is the worst position for sulphur patients; they cannot stand; every standing position is uncomfortable. Dirty, filthy people, prone to skin affections. Aversion to being washed; always <. after a bath.

Sepia officinalis: - Eruptions are on bends of joints. Eruptions during pregnancy and lactation. Itching vesicles and pustules with soreness of skin. Eruption is dry or moist and discharges copious offensive pus like fluid, which when dry, cracks and exfoliates. Itching changes to burning when scratched. Modalities: Itching is worse in the open air and better in a warm room.

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