



香港紅十字會
HONG KONG RED CROSS

Eczema



Eczema is a common skin disease that may recur throughout the year. When the weather is dry during autumn and winter, the lack of hydration can trigger the occurrence of eczema. When the weather is hot, the condition gets worsened due to sweating.

Extreme changes in humidity and temperature can greatly increase the frequency of eczema. One out of every five people in Hong Kong suffers from eczema at different times. It can bring a negative impact on them physically and psychologically.

What is eczema?

Eczema is a general term that refers to itchy skin rashes caused by allergies. It is the inflammation of the epidermis. It causes itching, blisters, redness, swelling, and oozing or crusting of the skin.

Causes:

- Heredity
- Contact with substances that cause allergic reactions such as dust, wool, pollen, and pet hair
- Eating foods or drugs that cause allergic reactions
- Affected by emotional distress or autoimmune conditions



Symptoms of eczema

- Skin covered by a red, patchy rash with undefined edges
- Acute eczema can cause blisters, which may predispose the skin to secondary bacterial infection
- Skin affected by chronic eczema will be thickened and the surface will appear rough and dry
- Affect daily activities at school or work due to the lack of concentration and insomnia



Common areas of eczema

The location of eczema varies with causes. Atopic dermatitis generally affects the **skin flexures** such as the **neck, inner surfaces of the elbow or knee joints**, whereas contact dermatitis is often found in areas **where the skin is exposed to external irritants or allergens**. Elderly patients with age-related skin dryness often develop eczema over the **lower legs**. Eczema related to drug allergy often started over the **trunk** with later generalization.

Traditional Chinese medicine for eczema

Traditional Chinese medicine believes that the formation of eczema was due to physical factors, eating disorders, and damage to the spleen and stomach.

It treats patients according to their different causes and mechanisms, such as clearing away heat, removing dampness and relieving itching in the **acute stage**, strengthening the spleen in the **sub-acute stage**, and nourishing blood, moisturizing the skin, and stopping itching in the **chronic stage**.

While treating eczema, traditional Chinese medicine also **regulates emotional problems** such as irritability, nervousness, depression, etc.

From the perspective of Chinese medicine, avoidance of certain types of food plays an important role in the treatment of eczema. Patients should try to avoid the following foods:

- Seafood and shellfish: shrimps, crabs, scallops, clams, oysters, etc.
- Warming foods: red meat such as beef and lamb
- Fruits with warm and humid properties: durian, mango, pineapple
- Foods with high glycemic index: rice, cakes, soda
- Stimulating beverages: coffee, alcohol



Pay attention to whether the nutritional intake is balanced when you are trying to avoid certain types of food. Try to eat natural and diversified foods. **If eczema persists, seek medical advice as soon as possible.**

General care of eczema

1. Bathing

- Don't bathe for too long
- Don't bathe with very hot water. Use water of a mild temperature
- Use hypoallergenic products as instructed by your doctor



2. Clothes

- Choose clothes made from pure cotton which absorbs sweat and keeps you dry
- Avoid direct contact of the skin with wool sweater or flannel coat by wearing cotton underclothes
- Avoid the use of excessive washing powder when doing laundry, and make sure the washing powder has been rinsed away completely



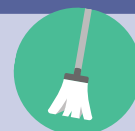
3. Dietary habit

- Avoid eating food which has caused allergic reactions before
- Pay attention to nutrition balance to improve body immunity



4. Household environment

- Always keep your home clean, avoiding accumulation of dust
- Don't use carpet, upholstered sofa, or fluffy toys
- Don't keep hairy pets or grow flowering plants
- Maintain an optimal indoor temperature to prevent sweating



5. Outdoor activities

- Avoid doing outdoor activities under strong sunshine to prevent skin irritation caused by excessive sweating
- Always prepare a wet towel to wipe the sweat
- Keep clean after exercise as soon as possible



6. Skincare

- Use moisturizing products as instructed by your doctor frequently to keep skin moist

