



ZAP FATIGUE WITH THIS HERB

ARE PLANT-BASED MILKS RIGHT FOR YOU?

FIND THE BEST FUEL FOR YOUR WORKOUT

THE FOOD ISSUE

SIMPLE SOUPS FOR CHILLY NIGHTS

Yum!
SPLIT PEA, BUTTERNUT & BACON SOUP
PAGE 67



SWELL

strategies

A protruding pore. An itchy patch. Lingering redness. There are many unwelcome ways skin inflammation can loudly announce itself. But with the scoop on how to identify and treat various conditions, you can learn to defuse the situation.

by INGRIE WILLIAMS

photography by GEOFFREY ROSS | art direction by JACKIE SHIPLEY

ECZEMA

Also called dermatitis, eczema describes a group of diseases that cause inflammation of the skin. It creates non-contagious dry, red, itchy and swollen patches or bumps, which may also flake, ooze and crust. Eczema most commonly appears in the creases of inner arms and the backs of knees but can occur anywhere on the body.

CAUSE + EFFECT

When your largest organ (that's skin!) is unhappy, you're bound to notice. But the culprit can remain a mystery: an irritation can be a response to an outer element or the result of an internal predisposition.

"There are different types of eczema," says Dr. Mark Lupin, a dermatologist and director and founder of Cosmedica Laser Centre in Victoria, B.C. "With atopic eczema, the more common inherited type, the functions of the skin and immune system are impaired. And there are also contact reaction type eczemas, such as an allergic reaction to metal jewellery," says Dr. Lupin. Paying attention to daily routines, interactions and/or changes in your lifestyle can help uncover the cause.

THE FIX

The protocol for treating eczema starts with eliminating common irritants. Say no to perfumed products and drying soaps. "Most 'natural' soaps are lye-based and very drying — so [it's] best to avoid [them]," says Dr. Lupin. It's ideal to choose

unscented or fragrance-free options for products making indirect contact with skin (think: laundry soap, fabric softener). Dr. Lupin also recommends avoiding the use of bleach in laundry.

Keeping skin moisturized is a key second step, which can be more challenging at this time of year. "Cold weather can dry the skin, and wind, reduced humidity and heated dry homes and workplaces can all aggravate eczema. In the winter months, eczema may also flare up from relative lack of sun," says Dr. Lupin.

Try a basic unscented moisturizer. "One that contains ceramides and free fatty acids will help replenish innately dry skin with missing protective elements. Whenever you try a new skin-care product, always test it on a small area of the skin before using it more widely," he says. For immediate, but temporary, relief 1% hydrocortisone cream is an over-the-counter option that can offer anti-inflammatory benefits. "If it does not improve in the course of a few days to a couple of

weeks, then it would be better to seek expert medical attention. If there is soreness of the skin, it's best not to use this and instead see your physician."

CHECK-IN TIME

Tried everything above and still suffering? Then it's time to see a pro and access more effective therapy. "The newest treatments include a novel prescription, recently FDA-approved, called crisaborole or Eucrisa. This is a non-cortisone topical ointment that reduces inflammation by blocking an enzyme," says Dr. Lupin. "And a new systemic biologic medication called Dupilumab, or Dupixent, is now Health Canada-approved for more severe atopic eczema. It is an exciting addition to the treatment [methods] as it treats at the root cause of inflammation by inhibiting proteins. Moisturizers are also becoming more intelligent. Rather than just coating the skin, many now contain ingredients that help improve its barrier function by supplying missing building blocks, promoting healthier skin from the inside out."

"It is less common that foods are the main trigger of eczema, so complete dietary modification is rarely helpful. But a healthy diet, as with anything, is always a good idea."

DR. MARK LUPIN