

DEBUNKING ECZEMA MYTHS



MYTH *“Only children get eczema”*

FACT

Eczema can occur at any age and that is why adults should pay attention to warning signs. While the majority of cases appear in babies and disappear from about six years of age, the condition can continue into adulthood or develop in adults and cause as much heartache and distress as in all ages. Patients who present with eczema later in life without any prior skin issues should seek further medical testing to rule out underlying causes such as allergies or reactions to new medication.



MYTH *“Eczema is no big deal”*

FACT

Nothing could be further from the truth. While everyone occasionally experiences dry skin, eczema can be a physical and emotional nightmare. While dry skin is one of the symptoms of eczema, a key impact of the condition is an intense itch. Prolonged scratching can cause the skin to bleed, lead to infection and long-term skin changes of thickening and pigmentation. Eczema is a serious health issue that can negatively impact on a sufferer's quality of life and lead to emotional distress.



MYTH *“Eczema will clear up on its own”*

FACT

It is essential to treat eczema itching and irritation to prevent serious complications. Ignoring the issue for too long can result in skin damage and painful bacterial infections that, in turn, can make the symptoms even more unbearable. Eczema is not a mild itch that will disappear on its own. It should be treated as quickly as possible – be it through medication, creams or lifestyle changes, to ensure the itch-scratch-inflammation-infection cycle does not unfold.



MYTH *“Eczema can be cured”*

FACT

There is currently no cure for eczema but the condition can be managed. While some children will grow out of eczema as they get older, others will have the condition throughout their lives. The goal is to prevent flare-ups and manage symptoms when they do occur.



MYTH *“Eczema is contagious”*

FACT

This is simply not true. Eczema is a genetic condition. The myth that it is contagious is a serious concern. People with eczema need empathy and compassion not stigmatisation through misinformation. There is no way anyone can contract eczema by touching someone with the condition.



MYTH *“Eczema is caused by food allergies”*

FACT

Eczema is not caused by food allergies, although it is common for people with the condition to have or develop allergies. Many infants with moderate or severe eczema will also have an allergy to certain foods, but it is rarely the only trigger. Removing allergens or reducing intolerances in the diet may help control symptoms. It is important this is only done under the supervision and support of an allergy specialist.



MYTH *“My baby will have eczema due to a family history”*

FACT

While a family history of eczema does increase the chance of a child developing the condition, it does not automatically guarantee it.



MYTH *“Eczema is caused by stress”*

FACT

Stress does not cause eczema but it can trigger flare-ups. This is a very important distinction and why people with the condition should proactively take care of their mental health. The release of stress hormones can exacerbate inflammation and make it harder to avoid scratching. Mindful meditation and exercise are two activities that can help keep the condition in check.



MYTH *“Eczema is a superficial issue”*

FACT

The impact of eczema is more than skin deep. While the physical toll is visible, the emotional damage is not as easily seen but can be just as debilitating for people with the condition. Being itching, scratching profusely and battling damaged skin can become all-consuming and significantly impact people's ability to work, study or socialise.



MYTH *“There is no effective treatment for eczema”*

FACT

Eczema can be hard to manage and control but there is always hope. Treatments such as medication and creams aim to reduce inflammation and itching, heal the skin and prevent future flare-ups, while lifestyle changes can help keep the condition under control. Breakthrough eczema treatments are now becoming accessible. The key is to access support through a medical professional and organisations such as Eczema Support Australia.