



The debilitating nature of chronic eczema can prompt sufferers and their loved ones to consider non-conventional treatments in a bid to alleviate physical and mental anguish.

This includes alternative and complementary therapies. It is important to understand that many alternative therapies are not evidence based and may also have adverse side effects. While some therapies may be helpful, they should never be used without first seeking professional health advice.



### What are complementary or alternative therapies?

Complementary therapies are healthcare approaches, practices and products that fall outside conventional scientific medicine. They are not a cure for eczema but some people find they can help control symptoms when used with conventional treatments, hence the term 'complementary' therapies. Alternative therapies are often used instead of conventional scientific medicine.

### What are commonly used complementary and alternative therapies?

Western herbalism, Chinese herbal medicine, homeopathy, aromatherapy, reflexology and hypnotherapy. You should only use therapists who are properly trained, registered with a professional body and insured should anything go wrong with the treatment.



### Are complementary and alternative therapies safe?

Some complementary and alternative therapies are widely available in pharmacies and health food shops, including Western herbal tablets and creams that have been screened to ensure the risk of toxicity is reduced. There is still a risk of adverse effects with any therapy. People should be wary of using complementary or alternative therapies that make unsubstantiated claims or promote cures for eczema, particularly those sourced from overseas.



### Why are they cause for concern?

Potent and very potent topical steroids have been found in creams (eg: homeopathic, Chinese herbal, Wau Wa) from other parts of the world, while herbal remedies can have powerful side effects such as liver and kidney damage.

### But what if the product is natural?

Just because a product or therapy is 'natural' does not mean it is suitable or safe for human use. For example, some plant or food based natural creams may cause allergy sensitisation in infants or atopic people. The evidence for the effectiveness of complementary and alternative therapies is often limited and inconclusive. If a therapy's ingredients are not clearly listed, they should be avoided.



### Are alternative or complementary therapies only products?

No. Therapies such as acupuncture, hypnotherapy and reflexology can be useful in helping people with eczema relax and cope with stress.

### What if I want to try a complementary or alternative therapy?

Be cautious. Talk to your doctor or healthcare professional beforehand to avoid any adverse effects or interactions with your current treatment plan.

## ABOUT US

Eczema Support Australia provides support to Australians who are significantly impacted by chronic eczema and other atopic or allergic conditions. The registered charity believes all families and individuals living with these chronic conditions deserve our community support and is guided by the three pillars of: **1. Advocacy 2. Connection 3. Information**