

Dear Maria

My son is 2½ and has had large, sometimes bleeding patches of eczema on his shoulders and the crease of his elbow since he was 9 months old. He was prescribed Oilatum Junior, and Aveeno moisturiser, none of which work. I've stopped using them. He has organic dairy food and loves his milk at breakfast and before bed, but nothing is making his eczema go away. He does not react to anything else.

The symptoms of this common “skin” complaint affects up to about 10.2% of the population. Creams seem to be of little help, steroids are given to stop the inflammation. What baffles me is why so very little is done to discover the cause of this inflammation?

The cause is most likely deep within the body, creating a highly inflammatory response. As long as evidence of inflammation, eczema, is being treated, the improvement is at best minimal. The cause of the inflammation needs to be found and addressed. Current research indicates that eczema is, at least partially, an allergic disease. Serum IgE (one of the classes of antibodies) is elevated in 80% of eczema patients. Other causes could be due to Immunological abnormalities and/or poor digestion. Control of Eczema is critically dependant on finding and eliminating all food allergens.

Your son is reacting to something and it's important to uncover what it is. We know inflammation in infants, whether organic or not, milk appears to be the most common allergen. The second is grains that contain gluten. We also know that animal products contain Arachadonic acid, the source of inflammatory agents produced by the body called leukotrienes and a diet high in animal produce is unhelpful. In clinic I test for allergens, work on an alternative diet and advise on supplements that can address deficiencies in body systems and are helpful in healing.

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