

Scratch Pad

2007 EXCERPTS

Dear Scratch Pad:

I am 36 years old and for as long as I can remember I have been itching. About the time I was in elementary school my doctor suggested that it was eczema. It was not until recently, when I scheduled a visit with Dr. Lisa A. Beck, a member of NEAs Scientific Advisory Committee, that my ailment was diagnosed as psoriasis.

I started researching psoriasis. I do not like the steroid-based options and sitting in a sun machine is not appealing either. I prefer sticking with natural remedies. This being said, I recently found www.merryclinic.com. The Merry Clinic offers natural herbal remedies for eczema, psoriasis, and other skin related disorders.

It has only been a week but the results (in my case) have been amazing. Much less itching and smooth (nonpatchy) skin. FYI, the site says two to three months will pass before you notice any results. I have stuck with the recommended items offered on the site (Mineral Soap, Psoriaid Cream, Psoriaid Tablet, Skin Detox Formula). It is not cheap, but I think the results (at least for a week) have been remarkable.

If their eczema product line is as good as their psoriasis product line, then I highly recommend checking out the site.

Al Angarita
bnrtech@yahoo.com

Dear Scratch Pad:

I have started a regimen of one tablespoon of Apple Cider Vinegar in my tomato juice daily. I can't say that this has done anything for me, but I have read that it helps to lower cholesterol and high blood pressure and to relieve arthritis. What I do know is that I decided to put it on the areas of my 19-year battle with seborrheic dermatitis.

GONE!

I then decided to add this to my daily washing (hair too). I might smell like a salad, but it works for me. My skin has never looked so good! That isn't just my opinion but the opinion coming from others.

Apple Cider Vinegar. It ain't just for cleaning windows or the refrig!

Dear NEA:

If I lived in California near NEA headquarters I'd volunteer my time. Thanks so much for all you do—all of you! I want to offer just a short story of an Atopic Dermatitis patient:

My 27-year-old son just got engaged . . . in Florida. He moved there this past summer. My FIRST thought when he told me the wedding was to be in August was: "Oh no! RAGWEED season. Now my thoughts have taken me to higher places such as:

1. What if I'm to wear a sleeveless dress?
2. Will I have the courage to shake hands with all those people?
3. Will my face be all red and broken out in the photos?
4. What will my daughter-in-law-to-be think the first time she meets me?
5. If I fly in two days before the wedding, will my prune face have time to moisten up?

These are just a FEW of my worries...not to mention "Will the STRESS of the wedding lead me to break out in herpes?" (I do that too.)

And, "I hope it's not too hot in the church, reception area, etc., because I DO break out in hives when I get too hot."

Oh the worries of an Atopic Dermatitis sufferer!

But, I'm determined my son will have a great wedding and I WILL survive those few hours of bliss.

Have a very healthy and safe New Year.

Sincerely,
Carol Hughes
Dallas, Texas

Dear National Eczema Association,

The article by Dr. Sarah Chamlin on "The Clinical Aspects of Eczema" which was in the Fourth Quarter 2006 issue of *The Advocate* was absolutely great! We found many things in her article to be very relevant to our family.

As Dr. Chamlin described, we have found Benadryl product's to cause high yperactivitiy in our daughter, who is also dealing with eczema/atopic dermatitis. Plus we use bleach tub baths when necessary for staph infection's, although I would highly add and recommend using a well-ventilated bathroom. Our daughter also has asthma, and the bleach fumes can affect her breathing.

Also I would like to discuss open wounds when dealing with eczema/atopic dermatitis. Our daughter had the misfortune of hurting her knee while outside playing. She needed to be seen in the E.R. for wound care and cleaning. She was released and was told to use Neosporin and bandages on the open wound as necessary. Now four month's later, her knee is very scarred, raised, and discolored from using the Neosporin. We were told by our pediatric dermatologist that this might take up to a year to resolve or fade. I would like to know if anyone has had any similiar situations when dealing with open wounds.

Thanks for a great article. We look forward to reading many more in *The Advocate*.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Tammy Eigenrauch
Lutheran4@charter.net

A reader sends this note to Elizabeth Hoff, a member of NEA's Board of Directors.

Dear Elizabeth:

I wanted to drop you a note to say how much I enjoyed reading your article in the Fourth Quarter 2006 issue of *The Advocate*.

Like you, I am an adult who has suffered with eczema on most of my body for many years. I can relate to your stories about itching and trying to hide your skin in front of the public and friends. I owned no sleeveless clothing. I am with you when you talked about washing your sheets before the maid arrived. I owned lots of deep colored sheets with crazy prints in order to hide the blood stains. I laughed about the positive things you mentioned about this disease. Before reading your article, I never realized that that is why I never had smelly shoes in gym class! I will say that the *New York Times* print will come off even on the driest hands.

Several years ago, my dermatologist, whom I had been going to for many years (at NYU Hospital), sat me down and told me about a drug, CellCept (mycophenolate mofetil), that was designed to lower a person's immune system to allow for transplanted organs. It was approved by the FDA for this purpose. There was word that it had positive effects on certain eczema patients.

As he had tried everything else on me, and I had volunteered at the hospital to test so many eczema drugs, without positive results, he asked me if I wanted to give it a go. I was about 47 at the time, and I would have given just about anything a go, with eczema over most of my body. At the time I worked for JP Morgan Chase and I so much wanted to be rid of the itching and the dry, red, bleeding skin. I wanted to be able to have a manicure, and not have the poor person withdraw when looking at my hands. I tried CellCept, and my eczema disappeared. This is a powerful drug, and I have my blood tested quarterly to make sure that it isn't adversely affecting other parts of my body. For me, it is a miracle drug. Once in a while I will get a patch of eczema, which reminds me that it is under control but it is still with me. Unfortunately, I understand that while I have experienced a total recovery, the drug has not had as dramatic an effect on most eczema patients. They cannot figure out why.

Elizabeth, thank you again for your article. I wish you and your fellow Board Members all the best.

Sincerely,
Ellen King
Harrington Park, NJ

Dear ScratchPad:

Katie, my daughter, is 3 years old.

She has suffered from eczema since birth. The eczema is complicated by multiple food allergies which include milk, eggs, wheat, soy, peanut and chicken. The food allergies aggravate her eczema. She has had 3 hospitalizations for complications from asthma. She is seen by both a pediatric allergist and a pediatric dermatologist, at the DuPont Hospital for Children, in Wilmington, Delaware.

She has had several courses of oral steroids as well as routine maintenance medications including Protopic, Aquaphor, and topical steroids. The dermatologist informed us that 40 per cent of people suffer from eczema and Katie is within the top 3 percent of severity.

I know what it feels like to watch my child scratch herself until bloody. I know what it feels like to wonder if the clothing fabric is too rough for her skin. I know what it is like to remove socks, from my infant, and have skin peel away with the socks. I know what it is like to wonder if my daughter will get septic, from the topical infections, and be hospitalized.

Skin care products are an every day part of my life. I am happy now that I can get my daughter's socks off without pulling her skin off. I also wonder how all of these skin products will affect her in the years to come.

These are some of the physical aspects of what she deals with everyday. The emotional issues can sometimes be far more difficult to deal with. I have come to realize that people do not think before they talk. "Oh my god, what happened to her face," is just one of the numerous statements that I have heard when people observe my beautiful daughter. No, my daughter does not have poison ivy! No, I did not forget to put sun block on her! I must then explain that my daughter has eczema, a debilitating and potentially life threatening disease. Eczema is so much more than a rash.

Katie has eczema, allergies and asthma. If I could make only one of these disappear, I would chose eczema.

Our family (husband, daughter's Erin and Katie and me) work as a team. Erin, almost 6 years old, easily lists Katie's allergies and readily informs those around her about Katie's problems. My husband is a great caretaker of Katie, as well. Dealing with Katie's eczema is very stressful. I thank God that I am a nurse and our marriage is strong. I could see that a marriage, not quite as solid, could suffer greatly.

Despite here health issues, Katie has a spirit about her that I have never before seen in a child. She loves ballet, swimming and her big sister. Her blonde hair and cute smile are only part of the attraction. Her big blue eyes have a twinkle about them that leaves a lasting impression on almost everyone she meets.

Dear NEA:

I recently received your quarterly magazine "The Advocate" with your request to help fund research. I do have something to share with you that might be beneficial to some of your patrons.

I have eczema about four by six inches on my left leg. For several years now it has itched me to the point of bleeding from scratching it. MY family doctor gave me a prescription for some cream that made the condition worse. Also some side affects. My Dermatologist gave me a prescription for an ointment. It also made the condition worse and it too had side affects.

I tried a number of "home" Remedies of my own. About a month ago I decided to try some olive oil. I started it and 1 time after the first and second application I scratched just slightly. Sometimes I put a little honey in with it. For about a month now I have not scratched.

I don't really believe the honey is necessary as I went with olive oil only for about two weeks. I just put a little on cotton ball and apply once a day. Actually, some days it is hardly noticeable. One day I forgot to put it on and did not scratch.

I know that my eczema is not cured but not scratching has been a relief for me. Who knows, maybe olive oil and some other ingredient combined may cure it! Feel free to share this with others if you like.

Don Moore

A friend told me to try something rather unusual for eczema-eat a banana and rub the inside of the peeling on the eczema-I tried it-the results were staggering-no itching for 6 hrs with a single application. I don't know if anyone has ever had a study on the use of banana skin for the treatment of this rash but if it helps-why not try it?

Bob Yates