

Issue #1

eczemahq.com

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HQ

MAGAZINE

The official publication of **Eczema HQ**

Top 5 Tips for
Flare-ups

What's Really
Going on **Under**
Your Skin?

A Dermatologist
Reveals **HIS OWN**
ECZEMA ROUTINES
AND **PRO TIPS!**

REAL ECZEMA WARRIORS
SPEAK OUT

PLUS: → Healthy Recipes From the Lab
→ How We Support One Another

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Keep an eye out

Throughout this magazine, you'll find hyperlinks that will take you directly to more information. Click on any of these links to learn more about eczema, post content, and connect with others like yourself:



- Websites
- Eczema HQ logos
- Social media handles and hashtags

You can also click on article names and page numbers in the Table of Contents to jump to a specific article.

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Inside this issue

Welcome to *Eczema HQ Magazine*, written and compiled by the eczema team from eczemahq.com. We know what you're thinking: *Oh no. Here comes a lengthy research report on eczema.* Although it's true that a good research report gives us goose bumps, we also know a thing or two on how to make the path toward mastery of your eczema as entertaining as it is educational—and that's where this magazine comes in.

Within these pages, you'll find articles unlike anything you've read before on eczema. Top 5 tips for flare-ups? We've got your back. The science of eczema itch and rash? We broke it down. Because the more perspectives you can get on eczema, the better you can manage your symptoms and partner with your doctor on a plan to transform your experience with eczema. Ready to get started? Let's dive in.



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A portrait of Sophie, a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a grey cardigan. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey. The text 'HQ&A: Meet Sophie' is overlaid on the bottom half of the image. 'HQ&A:' is in a large, bold, purple font, and 'Meet Sophie' is in a large, bold, white font.

HQ&A: Meet Sophie

Sophie, from Seattle, Washington, has been dealing with eczema her entire life, but that hasn't changed her upbeat outlook on life. This 20-year-old student and part-time nanny stopped

by Eczema HQ to tell us about her eczema experience. She's overcome a lot to be here today, and her story can help others learn to juggle life with eczema.

“Eczema is always there, and there’s never a true calmness to the feeling of your skin.”

—Sophie, living with eczema



Watch people open up about their eczema—HQ style

The Eczema HQ team found 4 people living with eczema and introduced them to new ways to connect and share their experiences. Watch the videos [here](#).

HQ&A: Meet Sophie

HQ: How long have you been living with eczema?

Sophie: I was diagnosed at birth. My parents noticed the symptoms, but they were kind of expecting it because my dad grew up with really bad eczema as well.

You've had eczema your whole life. What's that been like?

I'm not going to sugarcoat it: There are days where I feel sorry for myself. But at the end of the day, if I just focused on feeling sad, I would never be happy. Obviously, I wish I didn't have it—and it would make my life so much easier—but I do have a really great life outside of the eczema—and that kind of makes it worth it.

How does eczema impact your everyday life?

There's really no set routine that will work to keep it managed every day. On a really good day, I'll wake up, take a shower, put my moisturizer on, then I'll be good for the day. But on really bad days, [it] starts the night before. When my skin is really bothering me, it'll keep me up at night. Either not falling asleep or falling asleep and waking up every 10 minutes due to pain, itching, [and] discomfort. Then I'll wake up the following morning exhausted, which in turn triggers your eczema—it's kind of a vicious cycle.

How would you describe eczema to someone who's never had it?

Living with eczema is like a constant battle. It's kind of a back and forth internal fight. It's always there, and there's never a true calmness to the feeling of your skin.

How has eczema impacted your life in ways people might not realize?

Ever since I was little, when we would travel, the first thing that my parents did was call the hotel to make sure that there's no down pillows, [the linens] need to be cotton, and it needs to be a non-smoking room. Now when I make a reservation for myself, it seems like a normal thing you would request. I only wear cotton clothing, and I don't use any kind of fragrance whatsoever [with] any skincare products, shampoos, or anything in my apartment. I avoid going outside if it's super-hot out. If I want to go somewhere there's [animals] that might irritate my skin, I'll shower as soon as I get home.

What wisdom would you pass to someone who's newly diagnosed with eczema?

I would say, be super thorough with your cream, baths or whatever it is that you're supposed to be doing. If you are just diagnosed, and you're

seeing a doctor, it is really, really, important to collaboratively work together. Because at the end of the day, your doctor does know more about the medical side of things, but nobody will know what your skin feels like other than yourself.



When wardrobes go wrong



Do you dress to cover up your visible symptoms? We wouldn't be shocked. More than **85%** of people with eczema say their condition affects the type of clothes they wear.

Top 5

Tips For Flare-ups

Flare-ups getting the best of you? These 5 essential items may help.

1 Phone it in (but not actually)

Although this might seem like a pretty run-of-the-mill item to include in this list, your phone can do a lot more than send texts and like photos. Use the camera to snap and save photos of your rash to show your doctor at your next appointment, or use your phone's notes functionality to keep track of triggers, allergens, or environmental conditions that may have made your eczema symptoms worse.

1



2



2 Keep dry air at bay

Say goodbye to dry air. Although there's no scientific proof that humidifiers can improve your eczema symptoms, we do know that dry air can sap your skin of moisture, making your eczema worse. If you live in a particularly dry part of the country (or if your home gets dry during wintertime), a humidifier can add moisture back into the air. A bowl of water can also stand in as an easy, low-cost alternative.

3 Moisturize, moisturize, and moisturize some more

You probably already know this—and you probably don't go anywhere without doing it—but keeping your skin hydrated with a quality moisturizer is one of the most important things you can do to better manage your eczema rash. In general, moisturizers that are free of fragrances and dyes are considered the safest and least irritating. But remember: The best moisturizer is the one that works for you, so it's important to try different products and get a better understanding of any sensitivities you may have to them.

3





4 Do your best to de-stress

When having a flare-up, you might find that stress can intensify your eczema symptoms. It may be time to unwind. Is exercise your thing? Get your heart pumping. Enjoy reading? Dust off your favorite book. Social butterfly? Connect with friends. Whatever works for you.



5 Go for skin-sensitive style

Eczema-friendly wardrobe? Now, that's a must. Keep in mind that synthetic materials can contribute to sweating and irritation—two things that may intensify your eczema symptoms. (We're looking at you, nylon and polyester.) Instead, try wearing soft, breathable clothing made of natural fibers. Cotton, preferably 100%, is a common favorite since it's soft, cool, and easy to throw in the wash. Bamboo has its perks too. It can keep you chillin' in the summer and toasty in the winter. Plus, it boasts antibacterial properties. We call that a win-win-win.

BONUS TIP

These aren't the only tips that can help you manage your flare-ups. Don't forget to ask your doctor about these tips and others that may work for you.

eczema
eureka!

Catching Z's isn't easy with eczema



Up to **30%** of adults with eczema experience sleep-related issues, including insomnia and fatigue.



What are your favorite items?

Outside of your treatment routine, what's your go-to flare-up item? Show us on Instagram with **#eczemaHQ**.



Get fluent in flare-up talk

Our **Doctor Discussion Guide** on the Eczema HQ site is designed to help you have more productive conversations with your doctor about your eczema. Get started with the tool [here](#).

My Eczema Experience

Is there a disconnect between what you experience with your eczema and what the doctor hears during your appointment? You're not alone. That's why we worked with a few eczema experts to develop a new way to help you tell (and show) your doctor what you're going through.

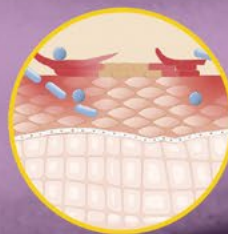
Take a second to complete the short questionnaire on our website—and be sure to share your answers with your eczema specialist during your next visit. They'll appreciate it, and it'll help guide your discussion around understanding your eczema and personalizing your care as much as possible.

**Evaluate your
eczema experience**



The Science of
Itch and Rash:

What's *Really* Going on Under Your Skin?



IF YOU HAVE ECZEMA, THEN YOU ALREADY KNOW: ITCHING IS NOT FUN.

The itch that eczema can cause is often reported as the worst part of the condition that people grapple with day-to-day. In fact, a recent study of adults with moderate to severe eczema found that **85% reported daily itch, and 62% reported scratching at least 12 hours a day.**^{*}

But what's going on beneath the skin on a scientific level? And can we better manage itch and rash by understanding it from the inside out? Here, Eczema HQ takes you to school on what you need to know the next time you scratch that itch.

ITCH & RASH ARE MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

It's easy to think of eczema as simply a skin condition. After all, what you know of eczema takes place on your skin because your skin is all you can see.

But the truth is that eczema is a chronic disease within the immune system, which can lead to inflammation and can ultimately damage the skin.

You might be thinking, *Well, that sounds as if eczema is a result of internal AND external factors*—and you'd be right. Science hasn't come to a conclusion on what the exact cause of eczema is, but we've learned a lot, and we're learning more each day.

One of these internal factors at play is inflammation. Although it sounds like a scary word, inflammation is usually a healthy reaction that defends against things like viruses, bacteria, irritants, and toxic chemicals.

In a properly functioning immune system, inflammation eventually subsides, but for people with eczema, the inflammation occurring under the skin doesn't stop.

Another internal factor that might play a role in your eczema is a protein called filaggrin (fil-ag-grin). You can think of this funny-sounding protein as a tiny defender that helps our bodies maintain a protective barrier on the top layer of skin.

Research shows that genetics can affect the amount of filaggrin in your body.[†] Decreased levels of this protein means the skin allows moisture to escape, leaving it dry and vulnerable to irritants, which can cause the skin to become prone to infection.

^{*}Eczema Stats, National Eczema Association (NEA), accessed September 2, 2020, <https://nationaleczema.org/research/eczema-facts/>.

[†]*Guidelines of Care for the Management of Atopic Dermatitis, Section 1: Diagnosis and Assessment of Atopic Dermatitis.* Lawrence F. Eichenfield et al. J Am Acad Dermatol, 338–351.

THE HAMSTER WHEEL OF ITCHING & SCRATCHING

We covered inflammation under the skin and how it doesn't stop when you have eczema. What you may not know is that inflammation might be one of the causes of why you itch. **And while the natural reaction is to scratch at an itch, if you scratch an eczema rash, you can cause damage to the surface of your skin, leaving it exposed to irritants and increasing inflammation.** More inflammation brings you back to square one, with more itching, more scratching, and the cycle goes on and on, like running on a giant hamster wheel of itching and scratching. This is what we in the eczema research business call the itch-scratch cycle.

On top of all this, studies have shown that itch and pain may have an inverse relationship.* This means one thing goes down as another thing goes up. In this case, when you scratch an itch, the sensation is actually mild pain, which temporarily masks the feeling of itchiness. This is why scratching can feel oh-so-good. Remember that while scratching might bring you temporary relief, continuously acting on that impulse may only make things worse for your skin in the long run.

How to avoid scratching the itch

Sometimes, the need to scratch can be overwhelming. And if you really feel the urge, try these best practices instead of digging in with your nails:

- Pinch or pat the itchy skin
- Apply a cold compress
- Wear soft, breathable clothing made of natural fibers
- Understand and avoid your triggers



Got your own method?

Don't keep it to yourself! Post your scratch-free method to Instagram with **#eczemaHQ**.



*Managing Itch, National Eczema Association (NEA), accessed September 3, 2020, <https://nationaleczema.org/eczema/itchy-skin/>.



ITCH & RASH KNOW HOW TO RUIN A GOOD TIME

Stressing out about your eczema might make it worse, because studies have shown that stress hormones like adrenaline or cortisol can contribute to inflammation and lead to eczema symptoms.*

Jane A., a 57-year-old teacher from New Jersey, knows all too well the anxiety that eczema can cause.

“I get anxiety from people when they tell me ‘Oh, you look like you’re broken out,’ or ‘You shouldn’t eat that,’ or ‘You shouldn’t drink that,’ and it upsets me. It doesn’t happen often [anymore] because I’m living by myself now, and my close family members know not to say anything because I’ve shut them down.”

—Jane A., living with eczema

If you’re feeling the emotional drain that eczema can bring on, you’re not alone. More than 30% of people with eczema are diagnosed with depression and/or anxiety.* It’s clear that eczema’s effects aren’t limited to the skin. The stress brought on by your eczema can impact other areas of your life, causing issues with sleep and your overall emotional health. If this sounds like you, it may be beneficial to talk to your doctor about stress reduction.

KEEP DISCOVERING MORE ABOUT YOUR ECZEMA

Hopefully, you’ve come to understand a bit more about eczema’s inner workings under your skin, but we’re only scratching the surface here in the pages of *Eczema HQ Magazine*. If you feel like getting more in-depth on the science of eczema, visit eczemahq.com to discover a wide array of information that can help you better understand your condition and better manage it.

Eczema Bites:

An Anti-inflammatory Recipe

If you can't take the itch and rash, get in the kitchen. That's not an insult—it's helpful advice. Did you know that the right foods could reduce levels of inflammation? So, what could you reach for the next time you open the fridge? Eczema HQ teamed up with a dietician to bring you an anti-inflammatory meal that's as good in flavor as it is for your nutrition.

Pro tip: Remember, not everyone reacts to certain ingredients the same way. Discuss any changes to your diet with your eczema specialist first.

Cool and Creamy Mint Berry Smoothie

Servings: 1 smoothie

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup unsweetened dairy alternative
- 1/2 cup frozen blueberries
- 1/2 medium avocado
- 1/3 cup frozen bananas
- 1/3 cup fresh mint leaves

PREPARATION:

Add all ingredients to a high-powered blender and process until smooth or to your desired consistency. Top with pumpkin seeds or hemp hearts for added crunch and omega-3's!



What's your go-to recipe?

We want to know what you're cooking up. Post a picture of your favorite anti-inflammatory recipe to Instagram with **#eczemaHQ**.





A Dermatologist (*With Eczema!*) Reveals His Routine

Dr. Rocco Serrao has a lot in common with his patients. As a dermatologist living with eczema, he understands the constant effort it takes to keep his symptoms in check. Take a look at his weekend routine to get a sneak peek at how a dermatologist handles his own eczema.

Morning



I start my day with a bath or a shower that's *just* the right temperature (not too hot, not too cold). I wash with a gentle cleaner and then thoroughly dry my body from head to toe. Last but certainly not least, I apply moisturizer all over.

Noon



If it's laundry day, I use a specific detergent to avoid triggering a flare-up.

Moisture Break!



From the moment I wake up until the moment I go to bed, I'm constantly caring for my skin. I reapply moisturizer throughout the day, as needed, to keep my skin hydrated and avoid flare-ups.

Evening



I love a good meal, but I try to stay away from foods or drinks that can trigger my eczema, like red wine.

Afternoon



If my symptoms aren't too bad, I love to go for a hike or spend time outdoors as long as I don't sweat—that's never good for my eczema.



Dr. Serrao keeps it real

Watch Dr. Serrao talk about eczema experiences with other eczema warriors in these [videos](#).



Every year, nearly

5.9 MILLION

workdays are
lost due to eczema

That's the sum of *a lot* of doctor appointments and a major loss in productivity.

Where There's Eczema, There's Eczema Support

Battling eczema can sometimes feel isolating.

But you're never alone, and these eczema support groups are here for you.

When up to **one-half of adults** with eczema avoid social interactions because of their skin's appearance, it's no wonder that those living with it can sometimes feel alone in their ongoing fight with their condition.* Sometimes, you feel more like being heard than seen (especially during a flare-up). Luckily, there's no shortage of online communities where you can make new connections, share your experiences, and relate with others. Here are a few:

1

National Eczema Association's Online Community

[NationalEczema.org](https://nationaleczema.org)

The National Eczema Association (NEA) maintains an online community of more than 17,000 members, where you connect with others about similar experiences.

4

Eczema HQ's Instagram Account

[@eczemaHQ](https://www.instagram.com/eczemaHQ)

As the kids say these days, follow us on the 'gram. We'll keep your feed interesting with the latest in eczema news and research.

2

Eczema HQ's Facebook Page

[f @eczemaHQ](https://www.facebook.com/eczemaHQ)

Join in on the discussions taking place about what's new with Eczema HQ, research, and more on our very own Facebook page.

3

AltogetherEczema

[AltogetherEczema.org](https://altogethereczema.org)

Described as a "new global patient community," AltogetherEczema is a place to share eczema experiences, explore community issues, and act for changes that will improve the lives of people with eczema.

5

Talkhealth's TalkEczema Online Forum

[Talkhealthpartnership.com/TalkEczema](https://talkhealthpartnership.com/TalkEczema)

Share your experiences or support others in their daily battles with eczema on Talkhealth's online forum.



*Eczema Stats, National Eczema Association (NEA), accessed September 2, 2020, <https://nationaleczema.org/research/eczema-facts/>.



Got skin and itch questions? We've got answers.

Here are a few questions we've heard from people living with eczema. If you're looking to boost your skintelligence, you just might find an answer you're looking for here.



My brothers also have eczema, but mine is so much worse. Why are some cases worse than others?

—Sophie, 20 years old

Eczema loves being unpredictable. For some people it causes consistent symptoms; for others, it's like a daily roller coaster. Many of you know the drill: One day you could be riding high without many symptoms, and the next day you could be plunging headfirst into a flare-up. That's why it's so important to monitor and track your eczema activity, and share details about your symptoms with your doctor, so they can get a better understanding of your experience to help you better manage your condition.



I wonder sometimes if [eczema] has something to do with our environment. Where we live, the water in our house. I want to know if that affects [eczema].

—Jane, 57 years old

Yep! Where you live and what's around you can definitely trigger eczema. Check this: Air pollutants such as tobacco smoke and traffic pollution are known to affect the skin. Climate, too—which includes humidity, temperature, and water (yes, water). But remember—everyone's experience with eczema varies. If you have questions about how your surroundings could be affecting your skin, make sure to bring it up at your next doctor's visit.



I've been scratching like crazy. What can I do to better manage this?

—Christina, 30 years old

Great question! In the *Top 5 Tips for Flare-ups* section of this magazine, we covered some of the ways that may help relieve itch, such as moisturizing and breathable clothing. But did you know it's possible to manage itch...with your mind? It's true. You can use meditation to "train your brain" to stay focused on something other than scratching an itch. According to a study conducted by Emory University, eczema patients who tried meditation found that they felt more in control of their skin and that meditation helped improve their quality of life.* So, although we know moisturizers and other products can help your eczema symptoms, you might find that your mind can give you some relief, too. Make sure to ask your doctor about all the ways to manage itch at your next visit.



I'm happy for the advances we've made in eczema. [If] I were living back in the 1600s, what would've happened to me?

—Rocco, 38 years old

Well, there aren't many records of eczema before 1933—that's when atopic dermatitis was first named by a physician. But here's what we know before that. The word *eczema* was coined in AD 543 by a Greek physician. (It translates to "to boil out"—yeesh!) It seems the Greeks had quite a knack for skintelligence, as chronically itchy skin was first observed by the Greek physician Hippocrates nearly 2,500 years ago. But that was a long time ago, and a lot has changed since then—which is why the HQ team is always staying up to date with the latest information in today's eczema world.

Still got skin questions? We got you.

Drop us a line, and we'll do our best to impart some knowledge. Don't be shy: we love all types of questions. (The more, the merrier!) Until next time, thanks for reading. May your days—and your skin—be calm.



Have a question for the experts?

Send us a direct message at [Facebook.com/eczemaHQ](https://www.facebook.com/eczemaHQ) and let us know what's on your mind.



*Can meditation help ease eczema itch?, National Eczema Association (NEA), accessed September 27, 2020, <https://nationaleczema.org/meditation-ease-itch/>.

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