

The 5-Step Approach to Allergy Prone Skin



If you have eczema or allergy-prone skin, you are not alone.

The National Eczema Society estimates that today 1 in 5 children and 1 in 12 adults suffer from some form of eczema. The aim of writing this article is to offer some helpful skincare tips * based on our experience. We would also like to ensure that you get the most from you Essential Care products.*

Step 1: Keep the skin clean

– especially important for eczema-prone skin

Bacteria, particularly Staphylococcus aureus, are one of the most important triggers of eczema (they are found on over 90% of eczematous skin and 5% of normal skin). Staphylococcus aureus can activate the immune system around them, which manifests as an irritation on the skin. (Ultra Rich contains a herb specifically active against this type of bacteria). Wash hands frequently and keep fingernails short. Keep the skin clean using cool or warm (not hot) water and use mild, non-irritating cleansers as necessary (see side panel). Dry gently.

The skin's lipids (fatty substances) that hold skin cells together, tend to be less abundant with eczema and dermatitis. This can be due to unusually low production by the skin cells, but may also be due to excess removal of lipids through repeated use of harsh soap and detergents. It is therefore very important to avoid cleansing products that may further dry and irritate the skin (see below).

Step 2:

Use the power of plants

to alleviate itching and promote healing

Scratching itchy skin activates the immune system in the affected area as it causes the release of chemical trigger substances which initiate other immune reactions. Hence the 'itch-scratch cycle'. The conventional answer to this problem is steroid creams which suppress the immune system. But stopping itching and inflammation with herbs such as chickweed and chamomile is kinder to the body and may offer a more long term solution. In fact, the level of concentration of the particular chamomile we use in our preparations has been shown to be at least as effective at reducing inflammation as mild hydrocortisone (steroid), but without the negative side effects.

Other herbs such as calendula and aloe vera have proven powerful skin-healing capabilities.

A damaged aloe vera leaf seals over quickly with a film and a rubber-like protective coating to prevent the loss of water.

In a short time, the wound heals completely. The enzymes that enable this process have a similar effect in humans. Aloe vera helps foster the growth of healthy new tissue and has been shown to penetrate to the water-retaining second layer of skin, helping to eradicate dead cells which not only rejuvenates the skin but also fights infection.

Step 3: Moisturise naturally

Emollients or moisturisers are extremely important to rehydrate dry, irritated skin. By penetrating between the skin cells, a good emollient helps to substitute for the lack of the skin's own lipids, reducing dryness, moisture loss, and access by infection-causing organisms. Commonly prescribed emollients, including aqueous cream, are based on petroleum derivatives like paraffin wax, mineral oil and petroleum jelly which tend to clog the skin pores because the molecules are too large to be absorbed. Whilst this petroleum barrier reduces moisture loss, it also prevents the skin from breathing, secreting toxins and shedding the heat generated by inflammation. Generally described as 'inert' with no active skin benefits, petroleum oils tend to absorb the vitamins A and E from the skin, so vital for its maintenance and repair.

Products such as ours, based on virgin cold-pressed plant oils, with all their health-promoting vitamins and minerals intact, are readily absorbed by the skin, provide excellent moisturisation and actively encourage the natural healing process. As an added bonus, these oil-soluble vitamins protect the skin from premature ageing by combating 'free radical' damage caused by exposure to the elements and pollution! Shea butter, olive, macadamia, sesame and coconut oils are particularly effective. Little and often is the key, keeping the skin moisturised at all times.

Using Organic Repair Lotion:

Margaret developed Organic Repair Lotion over 20 years of research and her own experience of eczema to find the most effective natural powerpack for irritated, dry and broken skin. It contains a synergistic blend of 10 skin-friendly, yet powerfully healing and soothing organic herbs in a base of vitamin-rich organic plant oils which calm, soothe and promote healing. Whilst relief can be immediate, do bear in mind that the skin takes a full 28 days to regenerate and repair. Apply gently, to the affected areas, without rubbing, at least twice a day as needed.



Using Ultra Rich:

Ultra Rich is an emollient blend of pure, organic plant oils, shea butter and beeswax for moisturising and protecting very dry, disturbed skin. It is safe for use on babies and on broken skin. Very rich in texture, it is rapidly absorbed and doesn't block the pores, thus allowing the skin to breathe. It also contains the traditional wound-healing herb St John's Wort (hypericum), at a concentration which has proved to actively reduce bacterial build-up on the skin and fight infection. Apply little and often to clean skin, either alone or on top of Repair Lotion for extra moisturisation and protection. It is also suitable for applying under wet-wraps.



TIP:

Apply a little Ultra Rich to affected areas before bathing and showering – it is more efficient (and economical!) for moisturising than adding to the bathwater.

The 5-Step Approach to Allergy Prone Skin



MORE TIPS:

- Apply a light covering fo Ultra Rich before swimming in a chlorinated pool or the sea. Shower off well and re-apply Repair Lotion and/or Ultra Rich to clean, dry skin.
- In hot weather, keep products refrigerated so they are extra cooling and soothing.
- Spray the skin with chamomile or rose hydrolat (floral water) or dab on cool chamomile tea using the tea bag. Allow to evaporate on the skin for a cooling effect. Either the floral waters or chamomile tea added to a cool bath before bedtime can work wonders to calm a hot, fractious baby (or parent!).

Step 4: Avoid potential irritants

Searching for products which contain natural ingredients is a good start, but finding products without synthetic fragrances, irritant preservatives and detergents is much more difficult! Seeking out chemical-free products is highly desirable for us all, as the long-term cumulative effect of putting them on the skin is believed to be a trigger for skin-sensitivity in the first place, but for those with eczema and allergy-prone skin it is absolutely crucial.

While this is by no means an exhaustive list, the following substances are some of the most common culprits of skin sensitivity:

Fragrance or 'parfum': Synthetic fragrance (often listed on the ingredient label as 'parfum') is widely recognised by dermatologists as being the number one cause of adverse skin reactions to cosmetics, toiletries and laundry products. Note that 'fragrance free' or 'unscented' on a product label indicates the lack of perceptible smell, but the product may still contain fragrance chemicals.

Methyldibromo glutaronitrile: Following the discovery of data showing the rising incidence of contact allergy to this preservative, the EU has restricted its use and may ban it. It is still used in many skincare products.

Parabens (butylparaben, ethylparaben, methylparaben, propylparaben): These preservatives are well-known skin sensitisers, particularly to those with eczema and have also been linked to cancer. Widely used in skincare – and foods!

Sodium lauryl(eth) sulphate (SLS):

An industrial engine-degreaser found in most shampoos and bath products. It may strip out the skin's natural oils leaving it dry and irritated. Eczema-prone skin is particularly sensitive to SLS. We list more potential irritants on our website www.essential-care.co.uk

Step 5: Take the holistic approach

Food:

Whilst topical (skin) applications can alleviate eczema a great deal, it is worth looking out for possible allergy triggers in the diet. Cow's milk, eggs, peanuts, gluten and food additives (like flavourings, colours and sweeteners) are common culprits, particularly in children. Breastfeeding infants is widely recommended whenever possible. Keeping a food diary may also identify the cause of sudden 'flare-ups'. Trial and error – and lots of patience – may be well rewarded!

Studies show that a common factor among atopic (hereditary) eczema is a lack of fatty acids and in particular gamma-linolenic acid (GLA). Taking a high GLA food supplement like Evening Primrose may thus be a good idea. For the little ones, a pierced capsule squeezed into food is easily disguised.

Clothing:

Pure cotton or silk are the best and kindest fabrics. Opt for light layers that can be peeled off as necessary and protect affected areas from exposure to strong sunshine. Choose skin-friendly non-bio laundry wash, avoiding fragrances and fabric softeners.

Essential Care products for cleansing:

Note that for babies, washing in water may be sufficient.

Natural Olive Oil Soap

Natural soap hand-made from pure olive oil does not have the skin-drying effect of conventional soaps. Additive and chemical-free, it is very long-lasting.



Organic Aloe Vera Bodywash

For creamy bubbles in the shower or bath this really mild formula will leave your (and your little ones) skin feeling moisturised and super-soft. No SLS, fragrance or harsh preservatives.



Conditioning Herb Shampoo

Deeply conditioning and balancing for ALL hair types. With organic coconut oil, aloe vera and biodynamic herbs for easily irritated scalps. The only shampoo in the U.K. certified under organic standards! No SLS, artificial fragrance or preservatives.



***Disclaimer:** No medical claim is implied or intended in relation to the products or information in this leaflet. It is intended as a helpful guide and contains suggestions based on many years of personal experience, current knowledge and research. At the moment the law requires that unless a substance or product has a medical license, no claim can be made as to its efficiency for a medical condition.

Please contact us with any further questions you may have. We will do our best to help.

Essential Care, 26 James Carter Road, Mildenhall, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP28 7DE