

TOTS 2 Teens Allergies



Eczema & food Allergies





Have you noticed a rash or patches of dry skin on your child's face, legs, arms or hands? If so, this could be eczema. Do you know that eczema (also known as atopic dermatitis), a skin condition characterised by inflammation (pigmentation, itching and soreness), is associated with the development of food and environmental allergies? However, it is not a type of allergy.





Food allergies are increasing rapidly and represent a significant problem in the western world. It is estimated that 3–6% of children are affected by a food allergy.

What is the link with eczema? Well, eczema affects nearly 20% of children and 30% of these have food allergies.

Let me share 3 steps I had to take to understand and manage my child's eczema and the link to her milk and egg allergy...





Identify...



...the condition. This is crucial because you can't effectively treat what you don't know.

Children with eczema have patches of dry, itchy, scaly skin which is typical of inflammation. In white skins, it appears red and in brown and black skins it appears brownish-grey. These patches are usually found on the face, neck, behind the knees and in the elbows; in severe cases the whole body can be affected. The symptoms can range from mild itchiness to very extreme discomfort which leads to scratching resulting in broken skin that can become infected.



Establish...



... the link. Yes, eczema is linked to food allergies but not every child with eczema has a food allergy. This makes it tricky. How can you establish this link? This where working with healthcare professionals is important but there are some things you can do too.

First, try and work out if the eczema flares up after your child has eaten one of the trigger foods. Of course this is impossible when a baby has not yet started solids or is in the early stages of weaning. In my case, my daughter developed eczema when she was only a few months old and on breast milk. So working closely with healthcare professionals to identify the allergen is really important.



Manage...



... the condition. Once you have taken steps 1 and 2, step 3 is made easier, though it can still be a challenge. There are 2 things to do here. One is to take steps for your child to completely avoid the allergen(s). This can be important in severe cases, for a period, to allow the skin to recover.

The second is to undertake an allergy challenge. As a scientist I was aware of research that has shown that gradual introduction of the allergen to induce tolerance and with the help of a healthcare professional can work. This was the case for my daughter's allergy to cow's milk and egg; I would therefore recommend pursuing an allergen challenge under strict guidance.





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help you on your journey to managing your
child's allergies.

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