THE SECRET WEAPON AGAINST

ECZEMA

HIDING IN YOUR KITCHEN

Wellness Mama
simple answers for healthier families
WHAT IS ECZEMA?

Eczema is an inflammation of the skin that can causing rashes, itching and scaling. It can frustrating, heartbreaking and painful. In some cases, the rashes can become infected, leading to additional problems.

Often, eczema is related to a dietary or environmental allergen and that aspect is important to address. The best dietary remedies I’ve found are included at the end of this guide.

My youngest child struggled with eczema for over a year and it was heartbreaking to see her struggle. I tried many remedies and a lot of them helped some but diet was the key to eventually fully reversing her eczema. For her, this meant a temporary removal of eggs, dairy and wheat.

The only downside to the dietary solution for eczema is that if she was accidentally exposed to these foods, her eczema would flare again. Over time, she improved as she avoided these foods and her eczema would flare less and less if she was exposed.

Through all of our months of trial and error, I found one natural remedy that greatly helped her eczema almost instantly and that was incredible at reversing a flare if she had one...

APPLE CIDER VINEGAR FOR ECZEMA

Apple cider vinegar (and white vinegar to a lesser degree) was incredible at helping reduce the itching and inflammation from her eczema. There may be several reasons for this:

- Vinegars are naturally acidic. The skin is slightly acidic as well in its optimal state so vinegar may help balance the pH of the skin and improve conditions like eczema or even acne.
- Vinegars are naturally antibacterial and may help fight skin infections related to eczema or other skin conditions.
- Vinegar is naturally moisturizing and nourishing with a high concentration of b-vitamins and other nutrients so it may help alleviate some of the dryness from eczema.
- The antioxidants in Apple Cider Vinegar and other vinegars may help promote healthy skin growth.
• When used internally, apple cider vinegar may help improve gut bacteria and soothe skin from the inside out

**HOW TO USE APPLE CIDER VINEGAR FOR ECZEMA**

Apple cider vinegar is also beneficial when taken internally, but I’ve found that it is difficult to get children to consume it this way. For eczema, we had good results with two methods:

1. **Vinegar Bath Soaks** - Adding 2 cups of apple cider vinegar or white vinegar to a warm bath each night greatly reduced itching and skin irritation when used over time. After several days, eczema was greatly reduced and skin was noticeably softer.

2. **Vinegar Spray** - for a more acute remedy, I added ¼ cup of vinegar to 2 cups of water and put in a spray bottle and sprayed on skin if needed. This was a pretty strong concentration, so you may want to experiment with a lower dilution and add more vinegar if needed.

This simple home remedy provided amazing and drastic results for us. Since vinegar is naturally acidic, use caution when first using this remedy. As I mentioned, other factors like diet are also vital...
THE DIET CONNECTION

I feel it is important to note that all of the topical remedies in the world didn’t help us until we addressed the underlying problem, specifically: diet and lifestyle factors that were causing/contributing to the eczema to begin with.

Just as you can’t out supplement a bad diet in other areas, topical remedies don’t address the underlying problem that is causing the eczema to begin with.

Certainly, eczema and other skin issues are complex conditions with a potential variety of causes, but there do seem to be some common things that help (both dietary and other).

In our family, our son struggled with eczema off and on for a long time before we were finally able to get rid of it. He was born via c-section (due to placenta previa) and was given antibiotics and steroids as soon as he was born. This led to problems with his gut bacteria, some learning delays and some skin/digestive problems. We started the GAPS program combined with a pretty intensive supplement and lifestyle change for him and finally started to see improvement.

If you haven’t heard of it, GAPS is:

“The protocol in Gut and Psychology Syndrome is basically an intensive nutritional program to heal the gut lining. It focuses on soothing and healing the gut lining with foods like bone broth and beneficial fats while boosting beneficial gut bacteria with probiotics and fermented foods. Depending on the severity of the patient, one either begins with or works up to the Introduction Diet, which is the strictest part of the protocol, focused on intensive healing. There are then stages as the person begins to introduce other foods. The most difficult factor of the GAPS diet is that in order to be effective, especially in the beginning, one must be 100% compliant. This means a lot of preparing foods at home, as practically any foods prepared by someone not familiar with the protocol will have things that can aggravate the gut.”

For us, it meant a diet high in healing foods like bone broth(great for skin) and healthy fats and removing certain foods including gluten and casein (wheat and dairy). We also found that it was helpful to avoid food dyes and any processed ingredients, though this was as much from a behavior perspective as a skin one.
If you or a family member struggle with skin problems, allergies or behavior struggles, I’d definitely recommend at least checking out the book Gut and Psychology Syndrometo see if the protocol would be helpful for you.

Of course, once diet has been addressed, there are some things that can be used topically to speed healing or limit discomfort during the healing time. For us, these things were helpful:

1. COCONUT OIL
I use coconut oil for everything. It is one of the things that would absolutely be on my list in a you-are-going-to-an-island-and-can-only-bring-five-things type situation. We use it for skin, hair, teeth, health and even soap making at our house, but it is also great for eczema (as long as the person isn’t allergic/intolerant to coconut!).

I’ve found that for us, a thin layer of coconut oil or a coconut oil lotion bar helps cool eczema itching and pain. For those sensitive to coconut oil, these hypoallergenic lotion bars work really well too.

2. SEA SPRAY
For eczema that is wet/oozing, I’ve found that drying it works better than trying to moisturize it and offers relief. For this, we use a homemade salt and magnesium spray. I’ve often heard people with skin problems say that they felt better at the beach, and it makes sense. Between the Vitamin D, the magnesium and the minerals in the water, thebeach is great for skin health!

For those who don’t live near the ocean, this homemade spray can help achieve some of the same benefits at home.

3. FERMENTED COD LIVER OIL
Sounds nasty (doesn’t taste so great either) but fermented cod liver oil is one of the supplements we take daily. From a past post:

“Fermented Cod Liver Oil (FCLO) is recommended by the Weston A. Price Foundation and is a great source of healthy fats for the body. This supplement is also an integral part of thetooth remineralization process as detailed by Dr. Price and by Rami Nagel in Cure Tooth Decay.
These two help reduce inflammation in the body and lead to healthy cell, hormone and brain development. They are especially important during pregnancy and for children while their brains are developing.

Cod Liver Oil/High Vitamin Butter Oil are a great source of the fat-soluble vitamins A,D, E and K and as such are supportive of hundreds or processes in the body. The supplements are rather pricey, but we've seen a big difference from adding this to our regimen (including skin health!)

We take Fermented Cod Liver Oil in Capsules or Fermented Cod Liver Oil/High Vitamin Butter Oil blend in Gel Form.

Yes, the taste is terrible and yes, my kids do have to take it anyway. You can sneak the chocolate flavored gel into smoothies though.

4. MAGNESIUM BATHS

For some people with eczema, soaking in water makes it worse. For those who tolerate it, magnesium baths and other types of detox baths can be helpful in skin healing.

I regularly add a cup of epsom salts or magnesium flakes and a few tablespoons of Himalayan salt to my kids baths. When I have the time, I take relaxing baths in this mixture also.

When I can’t take the time for a bath, magnesium oil also helps. Amazingly, I notice the benefits of transdermal magnesium (baths or magnesium oil) much more quickly than when I take internal forms of magnesium.

My favorite magnesium bath recipe is:
- 1-2 cups of epsom salts or magnesium flakes (magnesium flakes are absorbed much more easily)
- 1/2 cup Himalayan or Sea Salt
- 1/2 tsp of natural vanilla extract
- 10-15 drops of essential oil of choice (I love lavender and mint)

These three detox bath recipes are also all great if the person can handle warm water.
5. PROBIOTICS

Just as with the Fermented Cod Liver Oil, probiotics are one supplement that seems to make a noticeable difference with skin health (if the problem is diet/gut related). For us, high quality probiotics were vital when we were intensively doing GAPS.

Probiotics and probiotic-rich foods are another element that is often missing from the modern diet. I’m constantly seeing more research on the many ways that gut bacteria influences our health. In the past, people often preserved food by fermenting it, which also was a good source of probiotics for them. Now, most foods are dead, and we rarely ferment them in the traditional ways, so we don’t consume probiotic rich foods without a specific effort to do so.

We also make an effort to wash our hands and our food (a good thing with the chemicals on them these days) which also wash off the beneficial soil-borne micro-organisms that provide friendly-bacteria to the gut.

Since gut bacteria is so important, probiotics are one supplement I always make sure to take. You can get some probiotics in fermented food and drinks such as:

- Kombucha Soda
- Water Kefir
- Sauerkraut
- Lacto-fermenting almost any vegetable using whey (how to make whey)

We take Bio-Kult Probiotics (developed by the founder of the GAPS diet... it doesn’t have to be refrigerated) and I’ve seen digestive improvements from this brand (I’ve often see no result from other probiotics). We all take these as a daily maintenance, but at the first sign of digestive troubles or illness, we double or triple the dose until we are better. I also took these to heal after I got food poisoning, and was back to normal in a couple of days.

I sneak them into the kids smoothies and drinks, and my older ones will even swallow or chew the capsule (they are small).
6. ADDITIONAL GELATIN-RICH FOODS
I've mentioned that bone broth was an important part of a healing diet for us, and this was partially because of its high gelatin content. Gelatin is very soothing to the gut and is also great for hair, skin and nail health.

Homemade, nutrient dense bone broth is incredibly easy and inexpensive to make. There is no comparison to the store-bought versions which often contain MSG or other chemicals and which lack gelatin and some of the other health-boosting properties of homemade broth.

In selecting the bones for broth, look for high quality bones from grass fed cattle or bison, pastured poultry or wild caught fish. Since you'll be extracting the minerals and drinking them in concentrated form, you want to make sure that the animal was as healthy as possible. There are several places to find good bones for stock:

- Save leftovers from when you roast a chicken, duck, turkey or goose (pastured)
- From a local butcher, especially one who butchers the whole animal
- From local farmers who raise grass fed animals (ask around at your local Farmer’s Market)
- Online from companies like US Wellness Meats (also where I get grass fed Tallow in bulk-they sell pre-made high quality broth) or Tropical Traditions (I order high quality beef, bison, lamb and chicken bones from them at good prices)

This recipe for broth is my favorite and is an adaption of the recipe in Nourishing Traditions.

For those who aren’t ready to jump in to having a pot of boiling bones on the stove, some of the same benefits can be obtained from taking Gelatin as a supplement instead. We use Great Lakes Kosher since I was able to verify with the company that it is sourced from grass-fed, humanely raised cows, and as such is higher in nutrients.

I also use Gelatin in recipes like:

- Homemade chewable vitamins
- homemade probiotic marshmallows
- homemade “Gell-o”
- Homemade fruit snacks
7. HOMEMADE HEALING SALVE
For scars or blisters from eczema that take longer to heal, a homemade healing salve was helpful for us. Our son would get eczema on his face before we were able to heal his gut and we are still working on reversing the scars from that. One thing that is helping is this homemade healing salve.

My homemade healing salve (or “boo-boo lotion”, according to the kids) is helpful on eczema as well as: cuts, bruises, stings, poison ivy and skin irritations. It also helps diaper rash and baby skin irritations- just don’t use with cloth diapers or line them first!

Here is the recipe.

HELPFUL RESOURCE
I vividly remember how terrible it was to watch my son suffer through his eczema and I know the pain of not being able to take away the pain/itching a child experiences. The book The Eczema Cure is a very thorough resource and provides answers when it feels like you’ve tried everything else. Use the code WMAMA20 at this link for 20% off.