

Adjusting diet has pros and cons for treating eczema, study says

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People with mild or moderate eczema may gain some relief from their condition by adjusting their diets, but there are important downsides that make diets for eczema not a choice to take lightly, says McMaster University researcher Derek Chu.

Chu's international research team found that 50 percent of people with [atopic dermatitis](#), commonly referred to as eczema, improved their symptoms if they eliminated certain foods like [dairy](#) products from their [diet](#) and continued their other treatments for the condition. However, 41 percent of people with eczema saw their condition improve if they continued standard treatments without any dietary adjustments.

The researchers reviewed the data from 10 randomized patient trials involving nearly 600 people, as well as consulting with both patients and their caregivers. The patients with eczema included both children and adults.

The study was published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice*.

"My advice to anyone with AD-type eczema is that if you're going to pursue this dietary option, make sure you keep using your usual medicated creams, moisturizers, and talk to your doctor first," said Chu, assistant professor of medicine.

"Almost all patients going through eczema will consider a dietary strategy and they now have some hard evidence to hang their hat on. Our data show that going on a diet will not be game-changing for eczema; it may modestly improve it but diets also have important downsides."

Paul Oykhman, first author of the study and an assistant clinical professor, added, "With our data, patients, caregivers, and clinicians are no longer left guessing about the outlook with or without pursuing a diet for eczema and can now have an informed conversation together."

The Eczema Society of Canada says that AD, the most common type of eczema, affects an estimated 10 to 15 percent of Canadians.

Chu said the research will result in changes to the guidelines on AD treatment, which will include doctors being encouraged to discuss the balance of benefits and harms and patient values and preferences when encountering the topic of diets for [eczema](#). He said that many doctors had previously been reluctant to discuss [dietary changes](#) with patients.

However, Chu said, patients must carefully consider the benefits of eliminating certain foods from their diet, as this may increase the risk of developing potentially life-threatening food allergies and malnutrition.

More information: Paul Oykhman et al, Dietary elimination for the treatment of atopic dermatitis: a systematic review and meta-analysis, *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jaip.2022.06.044](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaip.2022.06.044)

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