

Homeopathic Healthcare

George Guess, MD

Eczema

The homeopathic approach to the treatment of eczema varies greatly from that of conventional medicine. That discipline suppresses eczema through the application of external topical agents, most typically cortisone creams and ointments of varying types. Homeopathic theory asserts that such treatment of patients is in the long term detrimental to overall health; the external suppression of skin disorders can undermine one's health and resistance and contribute to the eventual deepening of disease. For example, a common scenario encountered in pediatric practice is that of a child with a history of "successfully treated" eczema presenting with hay fever or frequent ear or upper respiratory infections or asthma. Homeopathy asserts that such deeper ailments are no coincidence. An interesting observation seen repeatedly in homeopathic practice is that when such children are treated successfully homeopathically for their asthma, hay fever, etc., they will almost always subsequently experience a resurfacing of the old suppressed eczema. When that is treated internally homeopathically, the eczema will disappear and the overall health of the child will be enhanced.

Following are two cases illustrating the homeopathic approach to eczema.

Susie, an eight year-old girl, was seen several years ago for eczema in varying locations of her body. It would tend to wander from patch to patch. The affected areas would swell, become red and itch mightily, the itching being aggravated by heat, a warm bed, the warm sun. She would scratch until she bled. She also suffered from itchy, runny nose and eyes year round. Otherwise Susie was healthy. She had a large appetite, preferring sweets and cucumbers. She slept well. Every night she dreamt of falling from a canyon rim. She experienced anal and vulvar itching at night. She feared high places and robbers. Susie seemed bold and forthright. Her parents described her as high-strung, strong-willed, loving, easily frustrated, and sensitive to criticism. She loved being the center of attention and often was the leader when part of a group of children. All of these characteristics and symptoms were consistent with the homeopathic medicine Sulphur and it was prescribed first in low potency — 6C twice a day and later in 12C and 30C potencies. After an initial period of increased runny nose, Susie's allergies and eczema cleared up promptly. Within two months she had no more symptoms. Her frightening falling dreams and her anal and vulvar nighttime itching also cleared up. She subsequently remained quite well for several years, requiring no more medicine.

The next case is that of Angela, a six year-old girl seen a few years ago with eczema of the backs of the legs. She scratched constantly. Swimming in a chlorinated pool aggravated her eruption. Angela also had emotional problems, namely extreme volatility. She would become suddenly extremely angry over any small frustration or disappointment, also when preparing for a test. She was quite anxious about her performance. She was a shy and sensitive girl, tentative about trying new things. Angela was very sensitive to being teased or laughed at. She was also sensitive to the slightest reprimand from her parents. She wept easily. She was affectionate and sympathetic. Angela feared dogs and cats. She absolutely loved thunderstorms and the ocean. If emotionally upset, as when insecure about a lesson at school, Angela could involuntarily pass an unnoticed stool in her pants. She craved butter and fatty, fried foods and salmon. Angela seemed a perfect case of Carcinosin and she was given one dose of 200C potency of that remedy. She did extremely well after that. Her eczema, after a brief flare-up, cleared up completely; furthermore, her angry volatility subsided. Her fear of dogs and cats lessened. She remains a sensitive child, but less so. She also stopped soiling herself.

As is all things homeopathic, treatment of eczema must be tailored to the individual, taking into account, as in the cases above, the unique and striking aspects of not only the eczema, but also the whole individual. When treatment is accomplished successfully, the patient, whether child or adult, will enjoy improvements in all or most aspects of health, in addition to cure of his or her skin disorder.

Following are just a few of the many homeopathic medicines for patients with eczema. The defining characteristics of the skin eruption are mentioned for each remedy, as are but a few of the general constitutional symptoms. In general, because the proper management of chronic eczema requires a thorough analysis of all relevant symptoms of the individual, the homeopathic treatment of this disorder should be undertaken only by skilled homeopathic physicians.

Sulphur: This remedy is far and away the most commonly prescribed for eczema; its affinity for the skin is legendary. All manner of eruptions are met with Sulphur. Characteristic skin symptoms include: itching worse from warmth, at night, from bathing (the rash worsens too), from scratching (usually). The rash is liable to burn after scratching. Sufferers frequently scratch the skin until raw. Contact of the skin with wool is very uncomfortable. Sulphur patients tend to be warm-blooded, crave sweets, fats, spices; discharges and perspiration may be offensive. Often Sulphur patients are noted to stick their feet out of the covers at night.

Psorinum: Dry eruptions with deep, bleeding cracks. The itching has many of the same characteristics as Sulphur. The patient has to scratch until the skin is raw or bleeding. The skin often looks dirty. The eczema tends to be worse in the winter. Psorinum patients are typically extremely chilly and anxious, with despair of recovery and fear of poverty.

Graphites: Rough, chapped, cracked eczema with the highly characteristic discharge of a sticky, honey-colored fluid. The itching is worse from the warmth of the bed and at night. Patients tend to be chilly, weepy, irresolute, timid and fastidious.

Petroleum: This remedy also has a very characteristic symptom profile. The eczema classically includes deep, painful cracking of the skin and is markedly worse in the winter. The itching is aggravated in the cold, open air and ameliorated by warmth. The skin is rough, hard and thick. Patients are very prone to motionsickness.

Dr. Guess is a family physician and has practiced classical homeopathic medicine since 1978. He maintains a private family practice in Crozet, Virginia, near Charlottesville. He is the past editor of the American Journal of Homeopathic Medicine (a professional homeopathic medical journal) and Vice-President of the American Board of Homeotherapeutics (a national homeopathic specialty board). www.drgeorgeguess.com