AN ITCH-SQUELCHING VIRUS
Phages are a type of virus that interact with bacteria to either destroy them or make them multiply. Most of what researchers understand about these viruses comes from observing them in the gut. A new study discovered different types of phages in the skin of people with eczema. They could be helping itch-causing bacteria multiply. Armed with this knowledge, researchers could one day develop a treatment that contains phages specially designed to kill itchy microbes.

SOURCE: Science Advances

UP TO 3 in 10
Number of people whose eczema is triggered by food—usually eggs, milk, peanuts, soy, or wheat.
SOURCE: National Library of Medicine

1 in 2
Number of people with atopic dermatitis who’ve had severe itch within the last week.
SOURCE: Dermatitis

BREAK THE ITCH-SCRATCH CYCLE
Researchers once believed that bacteria called Staphylococcus aureus (staph) caused inflammation that then caused itching. But after watching staph closely in a lab, they found it can send the itch signal directly to nerve cells by itself. It doesn’t use inflammation as a middleman. Staph activates a protein in nerves called PAR-1 that triggers the itch sensation. Interestingly, PAR-1 also plays a role in blood clotting. In lab experiments, anti-blood clotting medications blocked the activation of PAR-1 so it couldn’t trigger itch. This finding could pave the way for anti-clotting medications to help break the itch-scratch cycle.

SOURCE: Cell

KILL THE MESSENGER
When you feel an itch, your skin has sent a message to your brain. In people with eczema, that message may be written in bold, all caps, and underscored. In a new study, researchers looked at amino acids called brain natriuretic peptide (BNP). It’s their job to send the itch signal from the skin to the brain. People with eczema seem to have a lot more BNP than other people. When scientists blocked BNP in mice with eczema, they found that the mice stopped itching and scratching and their skin cleared up. This discovery could lead to treatments that do the same for people with eczema.

SOURCE: Journal of Investigative Dermatology
RINVOQ helps heal your painful skin in two ways—by significantly reducing the itch and clearing the rash of eczema

Dramatic & Fast
Itch Relief
- Some felt significantly less itch as early as 2 days after first dose
- Many felt significantly less itch at 16 weeks

Rapid & Significant
Skin Clearance
- Some saw 75% skin clearance as early as 2 weeks—many at 16 weeks
- Many saw clear or almost-clear skin at 16 weeks

You deserve symptom relief. Ask your doctor about RINVOQ.

What should I tell my HCP BEFORE starting RINVOQ?
Tell your HCP if you:
- Are being treated for an infection, have an infection that won’t go away or keeps coming back, or have symptoms of an infection, such as:
  - Fever, sweating, or chills
  - Shortness of breath
  - Warm, red, or painful skin or sores on your body
  - Muscle aches
  - Feeling tired
  - Blood in phlegm
  - Diarrhea or vomiting
  - Burning when urinating or sitting
  - Weight loss
  - Salt or sugar in your urine
- Have TB or have been in close contact with someone with TB
- Are a current or past smoker
- Have had a heart attack, other heart problems, or stroke
- Have or have had any type of cancer, hepatitis B or C, shingles (herpes zoster), blood clots in the veins of your legs or lungs, diverticulitis (inflammation in parts of the large intestine), or ulcers in your stomach or intestines.

Please see additional Important Safety Information on the following page of this advertisement. Please see Brief Summary of Full Prescribing Information on the following pages of this advertisement.
• Get emergency help right away if you have any symptoms or signs of bleeding clots during treatment with RINVOQ, including:
  - Swelling
  - Pain or tenderness in one or both legs
  - Sudden unexpected chest or upper back pain
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

• Tell your HCP right away if you have a fever or stomach-area pain that does not go away, and any of these symptoms of food poisoning:
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea

What are other possible side effects of RINVOQ?

Common side effects include upper respiratory tract infections (common cold, sinus infections), shingles (herpes zoster), herpes simplex virus infections (including cold sores), bronchitis, cough, fever, acne, headache, increased blood levels of creatine phosphokinase, allergic reactions, inflammation of hair follicles, stomach-area (abdominal) pain, increased weight, flu, tiredness, lower number of certain types of white blood cells (neutropenia, lymphopenia, leukopenia), muscle pain, flu-like illness, rash, increased blood cholesterol levels, increased liver enzyme levels, pneumonia, low number of red blood cells (anemia), and infection of the stomach and intestine (gastroenteritis).

A separation or tear in the lining of the back part of the eye (retinal detachment) has happened in people with atopic dermatitis treated with RINVOQ. Call your HCP right away if you have any sudden changes in your vision during treatment with RINVOQ.

Some people taking RINVOQ may take medicine residue (a whole tablet or tablet pieces) in their stool. If this happens, call your healthcare provider.

These are not all the possible side effects of RINVOQ.

How should I take RINVOQ?

RINVOQ is taken once a day with or without food. Do not split, crush, or chew the tablet. Take RINVOQ exactly as your HCP tells you to use it. RINVOQ is available in 15 mg, 30 mg, and 45 mg extended-release tablets.

This is the most important information I should know about RINVOQ. For more information, talk to your HCP.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of this medication to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

If you are having difficulty paying for your medicine, AbbVie may be able to help. Visit AbbVie.com/MyAbbVieAssist to learn more.

Please see Brief Summary of Full Prescribing Information on the following pages of this advertisement.

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RINVOQ® (RIN-VOKE) (apudactinib) extended-release tablets, for oral use

What is the most important information I should know about RINVOQ?

RINVOQ can cause serious side effects, including:

1. Serious infections. RINVOQ is a medicine that affects your immune system. RINVOQ can lower the ability of your immune system to fight infections and cancers. Some people have had serious infections while taking RINVOQ, including infections caused by viruses or fungi, or viruses that can spread throughout the body. Some people have died from these infections.

• Your healthcare provider should test you for TB before starting treatment with RINVOQ.
• If you have not had a TB skin test in the past 2 years, your healthcare provider may do an TB skin test for you.

• You should not start taking RINVOQ if you have any history of infection caused by fungi. Your healthcare provider tells you it is okay. You may be at a higher risk of developing infections (herpes zoster) before starting treatment with RINVOQ.

2. Cancer and immune system problems.

RINVOQ may increase your risk of certain cancers while you take RINVOQ. The most common cancer types are skin cancers. Lymphomas and other cancers, including skin cancers can happen in people taking RINVOQ. People taking RINVOQ are taking a medicine in the class of medicines called Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitors. A JAK inhibitor is a type of medication called a Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitor. RINVOQ is a JAK inhibitor medicine.

3. Increased risk of major cardiovascular events such as heart attack, stroke or death in people 50 years of age and older who have at least 1 heart disease (cardiovascular disease) risk factor and taking a medicine in the class of medicines called JAK inhibitors, especially if you are a current or past smoker.

• Get medical help right away if you get stomach- area pain that does not go away, and any of these symptoms of bleeding clots:
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea

8. Changes in certain laboratory test results.

Your healthcare provider should do blood tests before you start taking RINVOQ and while you take RINVOQ to check for the following:

• low neutrophil and lymphocyte counts.

These are not all the possible side effects of RINVOQ. For more information about side effects, read the full prescribing information. To get more information about side effects, call 1-800-2-RINVOQ (1-800-274-6867).
• to treat adults with moderate to severe Crohn’s disease when 1 or more medicines called tumor necrosis factor (TNF) blockers have been used, and did not work well or could not be tolerated.
• to treat adults with active ankylosing spondylitis when 1 or more medicines called tumor necrosis factor (TNF) blockers have been used, and did not work well or could not be tolerated.
• to treat adults with active non-radiographic axial spondyloarthritis with objective signs of inflammation when a tumor necrosis factor (TNF) blocker medicine has been used, and did not work well or could not be tolerated.

RINVOQ is safe and effective in children 12 years of age and older weighing at least 88 pounds (40 kg) with atopic dermatitis.

It is not known if RINVOQ is safe and effective in children with juvenile idiopathic arthritis, with ankylosing spondylitis, or with non-radiographic axial spondyloarthritis.

It is not known if RINVOQ is safe and effective in children under 12 years of age with atopic dermatitis.

It is not known if RINVOQ is safe and effective in children with ulcerative colitis or with Crohn’s disease.

Do not take RINVOQ if you are allergic to upadacitinib or any of the ingredients in RINVOQ. See the end of this Consumer Brief Summary for a complete list of ingredients in RINVOQ.

Before taking RINVOQ, tell your healthcare provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

• See “What is the most important information I should know about RINVOQ?”
• have an infection.
• are a current or past smoker.
• have had a heart attack, other heart problems, or stroke.
• have liver problems.
• have kidney problems.
• have unexplained stomach (abdominal) pain, have a history of diverticulitis or ulcers in your stomach or intestines, or are taking NSAIDs.
• have low red or white blood cell counts.
• have recently received or are scheduled to receive an immunization (vaccine). People who take RINVOQ should not receive live vaccines.
• are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. Based on animal studies, RINVOQ may harm your unborn baby.

Females who are able to become pregnant:
• Your healthcare provider will check whether or not you are pregnant before you start treatment with RINVOQ.
• You should use effective birth control (contraception) to avoid becoming pregnant during treatment with RINVOQ and for 4 weeks after your last dose of RINVOQ.
• Tell your healthcare provider if you think you are pregnant or become pregnant during treatment with RINVOQ.
• If you take RINVOQ during pregnancy, contact AbbVie Inc. at 1-800-633-9110, or FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088 or www.fda.gov/medwatch to provide information about the health of you and your baby.
• are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. RINVOQ may pass into your breast milk. You and your healthcare provider should decide if you will take RINVOQ or breastfeed. Do not breastfeed during treatment with RINVOQ and for 6 days after your last dose of RINVOQ.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. RINVOQ and other medicines may affect each other causing side effects.

Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take:
• medicines for fungal infections (such as ketoconazole, itraconazole, posaconazole or voriconazole) or clarithromycin (for bacterial infections) as these medicines may increase the amount of RINVOQ in your blood.
• rifampin (for bacterial infections) or phenytoin (for neurological disorders) as these medicines may decrease the effect of RINVOQ.
• medicines that affect your immune system (such as azathioprine and cyclosporine) as these medicines may increase your risk of infection.

Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist, if you are not sure if you are taking any of these medicines.

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of them to show your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

How should I take RINVOQ?
• Take RINVOQ exactly as your healthcare provider tells you to use it.
• Take RINVOQ 1 time a day with or without food.
• Swallow RINVOQ tablets whole. Do not split, crush, or chew the tablets.
• If you take too much RINVOQ, call your healthcare provider or poison control center at 1-800-222-1222, or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.

What should I avoid while taking RINVOQ?
Avoid food or drink containing grapefruit during treatment with RINVOQ. Eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice may increase the risk of side effects.

What are other possible side effects of RINVOQ?

Common side effects include upper respiratory tract infections (common cold, sinus infections), shingles (herpes zoster), herpes simplex virus infections (including cold sores), bronchitis, nausea, cough, fever, acne, headache, increased blood levels of creatine phosphokinase, allergic reactions, inflammation of hair follicles, stomach-area (abdominal) pain, increased weight, flu, tiredness, lower number of certain types of white blood cells (neutropenia, lymphopenia, leukopenia), muscle pain, flu-like illness, rash, increased blood cholesterol levels, increased liver enzyme levels, pneumonia, low number of red blood cells (anemia), and infection of the stomach and intestine (gastroenteritis).

Separation or tear to the lining of the back part of the eye (retinal detachment) has happened in people with atopic dermatitis treated with RINVOQ. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any sudden changes in your vision during treatment with RINVOQ.

Some people taking RINVOQ may see medicine residue (a whole tablet or tablet pieces) in their stool. If this happens, call your healthcare provider. These are not all the possible side effects of RINVOQ.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store RINVOQ?
• Store RINVOQ between 36°F to 77°F (2°C to 25°C).
• Store RINVOQ in the original bottle to protect it from moisture.
• Keep RINVOQ and all medicines out of the reach of children.

General information about the safe and effective use of RINVOQ.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Medication Guide. Do not use RINVOQ for a condition for which it was not prescribed.

Do not give RINVOQ to other people, even if they have the same symptoms that you have. It may harm them.

You can ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider for information about RINVOQ that is written for health professionals.

What are the ingredients in RINVOQ 15 mg tablets?

Active ingredient: upadacitinib

Inactive ingredients: colloidal silicon dioxide, ferrous fumarate, hydroxymethyl, iron oxide red, magnesium stearate, mannitol, microcrystalline cellulose, polyvinyl alcohol, polyethylene glycol, talc, tartaric acid and titanium dioxide.

What are the ingredients in RINVOQ 30 mg tablets?

Active ingredient: upadacitinib

Inactive ingredients: colloidal silicon dioxide, ferrous fumarate, hydroxymethyl, iron oxide red, magnesium stearate, mannitol, microcrystalline cellulose, polyvinyl alcohol, polyethylene glycol, talc, tartaric acid and titanium dioxide.

What are the ingredients in RINVOQ 45 mg tablets?

Active ingredient: upadacitinib

Inactive ingredients: colloidal silicon dioxide, ferrous fumarate, hydroxymethyl, iron oxide yellow and iron oxide red, magnesium stearate, mannitol, microcrystalline cellulose, polyvinyl alcohol, polyethylene glycol, talc, tartaric acid and titanium dioxide.

Manufactured by: AbbVie Inc., North Chicago, IL 60064, USA

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You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

If you are having difficulty paying for your medicine, AbbVie may be able to help. Visit AbbVie.com/myAbbVieAssist to learn more.

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LAB-9729 MASTER
STATS & FACTS

By Sonya Collins
Reviewed by Brunilda Nazario, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor, Medical Affairs

7 in 100
Number of U.S. adults who have atopic dermatitis, or eczema.

1 in 2
Number of people with moderate to severe eczema who spend more than 8 days a month in a flare. Are you one of them? This might mean your treatment isn’t working for you.

No. 1
Itch’s rank as people’s top concern with eczema—more than skin lesions. Does your treatment relieve the itch? Ask your doctor if something else might work better.

25+
Number of biologic drugs currently in development or recently approved for atopic dermatitis—increasing treatment options and expectations for symptom relief.

6 in 10
Number of people with moderate to severe eczema who say their symptoms are only minimally or somewhat controlled. New medications offer better symptom control than ever before.

1 in 2
Number of people with moderate to severe eczema who go to the doctor three or more times a year for help with symptoms. How often do you go? Is it time to reevaluate your treatment plan?

4 in 10
Number of people with atopic dermatitis whose symptoms are moderate to severe. These symptoms might call for stronger medications.

Sources: Eczema, National Eczema Association, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
One in 10 Americans have atopic dermatitis (AD). Although it’s most common to get it in childhood, it affects skin of all ages. AD is the most common form of eczema, a skin condition caused by inflammation that starts on the inside layers of your skin.

“Certain cells start this inflammatory reaction, and that makes the outside of your skin—the part you can see—get itchiness, dry skin, rashes, scaly patches, blisters, and skin infections,” says Jacqueline Eghrari-Sabet, MD, an allergist/immunologist with the Allergy & Asthma Network in Gaithersburg, MD.

But even though it may look like it could spread to others, it’s not contagious. You don’t catch it from someone else. It’s a complex disease with many factors that cause it.

CAUSES
Many people with AD have a genetic link to the condition.

“The genes involved are those that affect the skin’s epidermal barrier,” says Shadi Damanpour, MD, a dermatologist with Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas. “Other causes include how your immune system works, where you live, and what you’re frequently exposed to.”

Immune system. Eczema makes your immune system overreact to small irritants or
allergens in your environment. “When you contact a trigger, your immune system assumes that these small irritants are foreign invaders, like bacteria or viruses, that can harm your body,” Eghrari-Sabet says.

As a result, the triggers activate your body’s natural defense system: inflammation. Inflammation causes symptoms of eczema on your skin.

**Genes.** You’re more likely to have eczema if there’s a history of dermatitis, hay fever, or allergies in your family. You could also have a genetic mutation that causes your skin’s barrier function to not work as it should.

**Environment.** There’s a lot in your environment that can irritate your skin. Some examples include smoke, air pollutants, harsh soaps, fabrics such as wool, and some skin care products.

“Low humidity, or dry air, can cause your skin to become dry and itchy,” Eghrari-Sabet says. “Heat and high humidity can cause sweating, and that can make your itchiness even worse.”

**SYMPTOMS**
The hallmark of AD is a persistent itch. Once you scratch that itch, a rash starts to form.

“Doctors often call it ‘the itch that rashes,’” Damanpour says.

The most common places for AD rash to appear are in the creases of your skin, such as the neck, elbows, and knees, although you can get it anywhere on your body. Over time, these rashes can thicken and get discolored.

“On white skin it can look red and pink and on darker skin, purple, brown, or gray,” Eghrari-Sabet says. “But the cracked, dry, split skin—sometimes with blisters—is the same on all skin.”

Sometimes these patches ooze, seep fluid, and bleed, which makes them easy targets for infection. Controlling the itch is the best prevention.

Dermatologists recommend moisturizing immediately after bathing to seal in moisture, and sticking to fragrance-free skin care products, including laundry detergent, to help calm the itch that causes the rash. You can also talk to your doctor about over-the-counter and prescription ways to manage your condition.

“There are excellent resources and treatment options,” Damanpour says. “The best management is excellent skin care.”

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**COMMON ATOPIC DERMATITIS TRIGGERS**

These substances can set off the itch-scratch cycle.

- Rough wool fabric
- Dry skin
- Skin infection
- Heat and sweat
- Stress
- Cleaning products
- Dust mites
- Pet dander
- Mold
- Pollen
- Tobacco smoke
- Cold, dry air
- Fragrances

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For more on this skin condition, read Challenges of Severe Atopic Dermatitis—and How to Move Forward. Use your mobile phone camera to activate the QR code.
When you live with an allergic condition like atopic dermatitis, also called eczema, that flares at seemingly random times, it’s normal to wonder, “Was it something I ate?”

The answer is not simple. “Food allergy triggers of eczema are possible in adults, but they are a much less probable cause of flares,” says Veena Vanchinathan, MD, a dermatologist in San Jose, CA.

**FOOD ALLERGIES**

Peanuts, shellfish, eggs, and dairy are common food allergens. When you eat a food you are allergic to, your body releases antibodies to attack it as if the food were an invading virus. This causes inflammation, which can show up in the form of a rash, trouble swallowing, or a swollen face.

Inflammation from a food allergy could also trigger atopic dermatitis. But this tends to be far more common in babies and children than adults.

If a true food allergy is causing symptoms in your skin, you’ll probably have other reactions at the same time, like diarrhea, hives, or wheezing. When atopic dermatitis is the only symptom you’re linking to a certain food, that’s probably not the trigger.

**FOOD SENSITIVITIES**

Some people who don’t have a detectable food allergy may suspect they are sensitive to certain foods such as gluten, dairy, or sugar. People with atopic dermatitis often claim that giving up these ingredients did wonders for their skin.

Again, it’s not impossible, says Vanchinathan, but there’s not substantial research to support the idea that food sensitivities, without a real allergy, would trigger a skin flare.

That said, she adds, “If you are sensitive to something and you think it’s causing symptoms, I think it’s reasonable to see how you do off of it, provided it’s not going to impact the rest of your health.”

That is, don’t try a diet that’s so restrictive that you deprive yourself of essential nutrients.

**FOOD ALLERGY TESTING**

If you decide to pursue food allergy testing, it’s important to manage your expectations. First, keep in mind that cutting a certain food out of your diet completely won’t cure your atopic dermatitis.

“There is some interplay between food allergies and eczema,” Vanchinathan says, “but even when we detect the allergy with testing and do a food avoidance challenge, it doesn’t have a significant impact on the long-term trajectory of the eczema.”

Don’t let suspicion of a food allergy distract you from other factors that might be triggering your condition, too.
TREATMENT SMARTS

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS
FIND OUT WHAT MIGHT WORK BEST FOR YOU

By Sonya Collins
Reviewed by Neha Pathak, MD, WebMD Lead Medical Editor

If your treatment for atopic dermatitis, also called eczema, doesn’t bring you full relief, there’s almost always something else you can try.

“In the last decade, the FDA approved a number of drugs with different mechanisms for atopic dermatitis. Previously we had very limited tools to help manage patients,” says Anisha B. Patel, MD, associate professor of dermatology at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

Your doctor can find the best treatment for your needs and your preferences.

TOPICAL TREATMENTS
You might first try ointments, gels, or creams that you rub onto your skin. You’ll either use these daily for prevention or only during a flare.

“Since we have both topical steroids and immune modulators, we have many good options,” Patel says.

Topical steroids cut inflammation and symptoms, like redness and itch, on the skin’s surface. But they don’t treat the cause of the inflammation.

Topical JAK inhibitors, PDE4 inhibitors, and calcineurin inhibitors block immune system activity that creates inflammation. By interfering at this level, the medicines stop the cause of atopic dermatitis rather than just the symptoms of it.

LIGHT THERAPY
Phototherapy, also called light therapy, can help for atopic dermatitis that’s all over your body. You might also try it if you have flares in focused areas that don’t get better with topicals.

This treatment beams light at a specific wavelength onto your skin. “It’s a very narrow wavelength of light that has the best profile of anti-inflammatory properties balanced by the lowest skin cancer risk,” Patel says.

You may use a light booth at your doctor’s office or your insurance might cover a device for home use.

BIOLOGICS
Biologic therapy gets into the bloodstream to stop your immune system from triggering an atopic dermatitis flare. When your body is fighting an illness, it releases attack proteins called interleukins (ILs). The problem is that in atopic dermatitis, your system overreacts and releases ILs for no reason. They fire off and attack your skin. Biologics interfere with their activity.

You either inject this medicine just under your skin or into a vein. “People can be intimidated by injecting themselves, but these come in either prefilled syringes or in a little plastic injector pen that you just hold up to skin, click the button, and it injects at exactly the right depth,” Patel says.

OTHER TREATMENTS
In addition to prescribed care, you might use DIY home treatments to relieve redness and itch. Raw, irritated skin can also be infection-prone, which means you could need occasional antibiotics.

To choose a treatment, Patel says, “We balance the lifestyle of the patient, other health conditions, and the severity of the disease to work out the specific management plan that will work best for them.”
When you've got the dry, itchy skin that comes with atopic dermatitis (AD), or eczema, you'll want fast relief that also lasts. You'll have options including topical creams, oral medicines, and infusions or injectables. Treatment success depends on breaking the cycle of itching and scratching to give your skin a chance to heal while preventing future flare-ups.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO FIND RELIEF?

“It's important to recognize and understand that everyone is different,” says Benjamin N. Ungar, MD, a dermatologist at Mount Sinai in New York City. “No one answer will be applicable for everyone when it comes to how quickly you’ll see improvement.”

For mild to moderate AD, he says topical steroids can help control the itch and other symptoms quickly. Other fast-acting options for more severe AD include topical medicines containing calcineurin or JAK inhibitors that target your immune system instead of steroids.

A ONCE-DAILY PILL VS. BIOLOGICS

When your AD symptoms are more severe, Ungar says you can now take a JAK inhibitor by mouth once a day. It works on your immune system in your whole body instead of just on your skin.

“In clinical trials and also in my personal experience, some [patients] experience improvement in the itch part of the condition [with these medicines] within 2 or 3 days,” Ungar says.

He says that the itch may not completely stop right away, but you’ll likely notice significant improvement. The redness and appearance of AD on your skin may take a couple of weeks to get better as you stop scratching and your skin heals. Ungar says that depending on the severity of your AD and its symptoms, you may continue to see improvement over a few months.

Biologics also work on your immune system to control AD. You take them as an infusion or injection you can give yourself. You won’t need to take them as often as a pill. Ungar says you may notice less itching within a couple of weeks.

PREVENT THE NEXT FLARE

Once you get your immediate symptoms under control, ongoing treatment can prevent flares. If your AD is mild, even a good moisturizer and daily routine may be enough to keep your skin barrier working better, Ungar says. For more severe AD, you may need ongoing treatment with oral medicines or biologics.

He notes that some of today’s treatments can be both fast-acting and effective for long-term prevention. He advises focusing less on how fast a treatment works and more on finding the one that works best for you.

“It's important to remember that this is a chronic condition,” Ungar says. “The goal in the big picture is to improve eczema in the short term and then make sure it remains well controlled.”
SEX AND INTIMACY

GETTING CLOSE WHEN YOU HAVE ATOPIC DERMATITIS

By Rachel Reiff Ellis
Reviewed by Brunilda Nazario, MD,
WebMD Chief Physician Editor, Medical Affairs

When it comes to sex and physical affection, skin can play a pretty big role. It may feel like your atopic dermatitis (eczema) gets in the way of your sex life because of the impact it has on your self-esteem or because the symptoms are affecting critical areas.

With careful management of your condition and open communication with your sexual partners, you can create smoother sailing during your sexual activities.

FLARES DOWN THERE

“Eczema can truly affect anywhere on the body,” says Michael Krathen, MD, dermatologist at Essential Dermatology in Natick, MA. That includes areas that are important during sex, like genital skin. In fact, around 45% of people—men and women both—with the condition report that they’ve had a flare in their genital area at some point.

It’s important to make sure that any inflammation or irritating symptoms you have around your genital areas is actually atopic dermatitis instead of other issues such as a sexually transmitted disease, fungal or yeast infection, or menopause.

What your doctor prescribes to put on your arms and legs may be different than what they’d give you to put on sensitive areas, so check with your dermatologist about whether you need special treatment for your genital flare-ups.

“Ultimately, good treatment and skin management is key to a healthy sex life,” Krathen says.

LOVING THE SKIN YOU’RE IN

In one large study of adults with eczema, 57% said they had problems with intimacy because of their skin condition. Sex and intimacy require a certain level of comfort and trust, and for many people, atopic dermatitis patches can feel embarrassing.

Krathen says you may find that a direct, up-front approach about your skin with sexual partners can clear the air and put you both at ease.

“You can start by telling them it’s not contagious and they can’t catch it from you,” Krathen says. You can keep it as short a conversation as you want, just be sure you’re honest about how you’re feeling. You may even be able to use your skin care routine to your advantage and make it part of your foreplay.

“Ask your partner to help apply your moisturizer as a warm-up to other types of affection,” Krathen says. It can be a win-win for all.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Michael Krathen, MD, lists special considerations for sex with eczema.

- **Condom caution.** Latex, synthetics, and anything constricting can irritate skin.
- **Nipple awareness.** Take extra care with this erogenous zone if eczema is affecting it.
- **Use (water-based) lube.** Reducing friction helps sex be more comfortable.
ESSENTIAL OILS FOR ATOPIC DERMATITIS

A DERMATOLOGIST EXPLAINS WHY YOU MIGHT AVOID THESE PLANT EXTRACTS AND MORE

By Sonya Collins
Reviewed by Stephanie Gardner, MD, WebMD Medical Reviewer

You’re looking for a natural remedy for your atopic dermatitis, and you’ve heard that essential oils have benefits for the skin. But are they a good idea for your skin?

“There isn’t strong research to support using essential oils for atopic dermatitis,” says Steven Daveluy, MD, assistant professor at the Wayne State University School of Medicine’s Department of Dermatology in Detroit. “It’s best to avoid them due to the risk of irritation. Even when diluted appropriately, there’s a risk of developing an allergy.”

While essential oils may not be the right choice, you can safely explore other complementary and alternative therapies.

ESSENTIAL OILS, PLANT ESSENCES

Essential oils are concentrated plant extracts. You breathe in their scent for aromatherapy or dilute them and apply them to your skin. Common oils include lavender, frankincense, and tea tree.

BENEFITS FOR SOME, NOT ALL

Some research suggests essential oils can boost mood, kill germs, relieve pain, and cut inflammation. But they may not relieve the inflammation that comes from eczema. In fact, putting these potent plant extracts directly on irritated skin could make it worse.

SMART ALTERNATIVES

If your skin craves moisturizing oils, you’ve got options.

“Virgin olive oil, coconut oil, and sunflower seed oil have proven effectiveness in treating atopic dermatitis,” Daveluy says. “These are great natural options to moisturize and calm your skin.”

CBD oils may also have benefits for eczema. In a small study, twice daily CBD-infused skin cream reduced itching for some people within a week and completely relieved it within three.

“CBD is derived from cannabis but doesn’t affect the brain, so you don’t get high,” Daveluy says.

As for other alternative therapies, rice paper face masks can soothe facial eczema. Take the same rice paper you’d use to make fresh spring rolls and cut holes for your eyes, nose, and mouth. Then, wet the paper, press it onto your face, and wear it to bed.

For eczema on your eyes, black tea compresses may help. Steep the tea once and drink it or toss it. Then, steep it again. Soak a washcloth in that second cup and place it on your eyelids for 20 minutes, up to five times a day.

If you’re not sure about the safety or effectiveness of an alternative therapy for eczema, ask your doctor first.