

Eczema

Male, 77, a widower, presented in March with eczema on the legs, back, testicles, and upper body generally. He had first noticed it in the bath on the legs 12-13 years ago, and it possibly followed the use of a u/v lamp. It gets very inflamed and itchy, but usually is not really visible. He controls it with E45 cream, and it has been stable for several years.

Eczema

Warm water makes it worse, and (sometimes) chocolate and cheese. He cites one example of improvement: when he moved house (gladly) 5 years ago, it disappeared for 3 weeks, then returned.

He has seen two specialists, who prescribed Aqueous Cream & hydrocortisone preparations, but he prefers E45.

Eczema

Clinical features/PMH

- Tonsillectomy at 35, because of throat infection
- In 30s had 'dizzy turns', diagnosed as middle ear problem
- Submucosal resection of turbinates in his 50s – previously used to get 'bunged up'
- Three hernia ops, at 49, 56, and 75
- Ulcer op at 69 - bile duct rerouted
- Suffers from hiatus hernia, and occasionally takes antacid

Eczema

Social history

- Very little alcohol
- No smoking
- Walks a lot
- Lost his wife 1 year ago

Eczema

Diet

- Breakfast: Porridge + 2 slices wholemeal toast with margarine + cup of tea/sugar
- am: 1 or 2 apples
- Lunch: Meat + veg (often cabbage) + mashed/boiled potatoes (eats at various clubs)
- pm: (Possibly) 1 cup of tea/sugar + toast
- Tea: Cheese on 2 slices toast or baked beans/spaghetti on toast + cup of tea/sugar
- Evening: 1 cup Horlicks

Eczema

GIT

- Weighs 9 stone (57 kg): was 11 stone in army, but lost weight after ulcer op
- Defecation at least once daily - but usually a 'clayey colour' (for several years)
- Gets a very dry mouth, but better than before
- Very rarely indigestion

Eczema

NS

- Rarely dizziness due to low BP
- Sleep OK
- Slight deterioration of memory
- Sometimes paraesthesiae in feet

Skin

- Cold sores, quite frequent (has always had)

Eczema

Physical exam

- BP 110/80
- Enlarged veins under tongue
- No abdominal sensitivity
- Cold hands and feet
- Chilblains - started a few weeks ago

Eczema

Advice

- Eat more vegetables, fruit and fatty fish, and drink more water
- Reduce sugar, dairy food, and meat
- Do a liquid fast once every week or 2 weeks

Eczema

Treatment

1. Tincture/fluid extract:

Glycyrrhiza glabra (Liquorice)

Bupleurum falcatum (Hare's Ear Root)

Ginkgo biloba (Ginkgo)

Taraxacum off. (Dandelion Root)

Taraxacum off. (Dandelion Leaf)

3 times daily in herbal infusion

Eczema

Treatment

2. Fumitory (*Fumaria off.*)

Heartsease (*Viola tricolor*)

as infusion, 3 cups per day (6 cups on fasting days)

3. Capsicum ointment – apply twice daily to chilblains

Eczema

Rationale

- Glycyrrhiza: anti-inflammatory, potentiates effects of corticosteroids
- Bupleurum: anti-inflammatory, enhances corticoadrenal function, restores liver function
- Ginkgo: arterial vasodilator, improves microcirculation
- Taraxacum radix: choleric, hepatobiliary drainer
- Taraxacum herba: diuretic, renal drainer
- Fumaria: pancreatic and hepatobiliary drainer for skin
- Viola: anti-inflammatory, skin drainer

Eczema

Follow-up 2 weeks later

- No change in the eczema
- Still has dry mouth
- Stools now 'back to normal' - clay colour only occasionally
- Hasn't changed diet, apart from fasting one day
- Sometimes gets 'muzzy head' after taking the medicine

Eczema

Treatment

1. *Glycyrrhiza glabra* (Liquorice)
Solidago virgaurea (Goldenrod)
Parietaria diffusa (Pellitory-of-the-Wall)
Taraxacum off. (Dandelion Leaf)
Betula pendula (Silver Birch)
3 times daily in herbal infusion

Eczema

Treatment

2. Infusion as before
3. Chamomile cream – apply as required

Eczema

Rationale

- Solidago (Goldenrod): diuretic, renal drainer, anticatarrhal
- Parietaria (Pellitory-of-the-Wall): diuretic, renal drainer
- Betula (Silver Birch): diuretic, hepatorenal drainer, antirheumatic
- Chamomile (topical): anti-inflammatory, vulnerary, antipruritic, specific for eczema

Eczema

Follow-up 3 weeks later

- No itching for 10 days - cream not needed
- Stools slightly loose, light in colour
- Has cut dairy food, and eating more veg
- No muzzyheadedness
- One liquid fast in last 3 weeks

Prescription repeated as before.

Eczema

By June he was taking just the infusion, with no repeat of the itching. That month he reduced his intake to 1 cup per day, but after 2 weeks the itching restarted on the hips and shoulder blades; so he went back to 2 cups per day, and the pruritus disappeared after 2 days. The same pattern was repeated in September. Eventually he was able to maintain the improvement on just 1 cup per day, and was discharged in October.