Difference Between Eczema and Psoriasis

by YVONNE BANKS

What is the Difference Between Eczema and Psoriasis?

It isn’t hard to confuse eczema and psoriasis if you don’t have either of them. Both are skin conditions that involve noticeable skin inflammation that's uncomfortable and often itchy, and potentially damaging to the self esteem. However, there are some big differences.

Causes

Eczema: The cause of eczema is largely unknown; however, it has been linked to genetics and to environmental factors. Eczema can occur in people of all ages but is more common in children and babies. Many babies grow out of it as they get older.

Psoriasis: A range of things can trigger psoriasis, such as the weather, skin damage, stress, and some medications. Psoriasis has an adult onset in most cases, and very rarely appears before the age of 10. The condition can mimic other skin diseases, so a biopsy may be taken to determine the skin issue.

Appearance

Eczema: The skin is itchy, cracked, dry and red. It may have pimple-like eruptions accompanied by thick skin and crusty sores and the area may bleed, crust over, and ooze. The dryness of the eczema can lead to scratching and this leads to skin oozing pus or creating more patches. In babies, the backs of the knees and insides of the elbows are common sites for eczema, and in older children and adults eczema is most common on the hands. People with eczema have sensitive skin that reacts to irritants and allergens, and the hands are more likely to get into contact with these sorts of things than anywhere else. Additionally, frequent hand washing can dry out the skin even more and cause more eczema problems.

Psoriasis: Psoriasis involves the development of scaly, dry, itchy and red patches of skin, where plaques form. The plaques are slightly elevated and are characteristic of the condition. They begin as small bumps that worsen and eventually become psoriasis white spots. Psoriasis is more common on the body but can occur on the face. Fifty percent of people afflicted with it will have scalp psoriasis that can cover the ears, neck, and forehead. Psoriasis on the hands can also occur on the knuckles, palms, and back. It leads to incredibly dry skin and intense peeling that is uncomfortable and painful. Nail psoriasis can also occur, and discolors the nails and can lead to them falling off.

Treatment

Eczema: Eczema is usually treated with topical corticosteroid creams. Over-the-counter or prescription creams can be used depending on the severity of the condition. Oral antibiotics may be used as well as antibiotic creams, and barrier creams are used to protect against irritants.

Psoriasis: Psoriasis is treated with topical corticosteroid creams; if not successful, light therapy can be used. In some cases, oral medications may be necessary.