

Link between relaxation and eczema relief studied

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A Murdoch University student is investigating the link between relaxation and its ability to reduce the severity of eczema.

Australia has one of the highest incidences of [eczema](#) in the world. Approximately 20 to 25 per cent of children and 10 per cent of [adults](#) aged 20 to 50 years are affected. In general, cases of the disease are increasing worldwide.

Murdoch PhD student Katie Brocx said that stress-management is an essential part of the treatment for eczema, but it is unclear how stress-management positively impacts the condition.

“We are investigating how [relaxation](#) influences various psychological and allergic processes that may be involved,” Ms. Brocx said.

“In particular whether relaxation alters the function of the immune and stress systems in the body and also the perception of physical stimuli.”

While it is seldom life threatening, eczema takes a toll on quality of life similar to that of cystic fibrosis or asthma. The intense itch is torturous to many sufferers and through the aggressive itch-scratch cycle, leads to increasingly severe skin lesions and itchiness.

Treatments can reduce the severity of flare-ups, but there is currently no cure for the condition, leaving patients to cope with chronically relapsing, itchy lesions.

“If we can gain insight into why relaxation techniques help eczema sufferers we can improve treatment options,” Ms. Brocx said.

Eczema sufferers between the ages of 18 and 35 are needed to participate in the study. Participants must not be pregnant, smoke or take medications other than those for allergy, asthma or contraception.

Volunteers in the study will be required to attend a one-hour introductory session at the Telethon Institute followed by two, three-hour relaxation sessions at Murdoch University.

More information: To register for the study volunteers should contact Ms Brocx on k.brocx@murdoch.edu.au or 9360 6911

Provided by Murdoch University

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