

Study suggests symptoms of childhood eczema persist, likely a lifelong illness

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Children diagnosed with atopic dermatitis (AD or eczema) may have symptoms persist into their 20s, and the condition is likely to be a lifelong illness marked by waxing and waning skin problems.

D or [eczema](#) is a common [skin disease](#) that often begins in childhood, but little has been reported about the [natural history](#) of the condition.

The authors examined the natural history of eczema using self-reported data from a group of 7,157 children enrolled in the Pediatric Eczema Elective Registry (PEER) study to evaluate the prevalence of symptoms over time. The average age of AD onset was 1.7 years.

At every age (i.e. 2 to 26 years) more than 80 percent of the study participants had eczema symptoms or were using medication to treat the condition. During five years of follow-up, 64 percent of patients never reported a six-month period when their skin was symptom free while they were not using topical medications. It was not until age 20 that 50 percent of patients had at least one six-month period free of symptoms and treatment. The authors acknowledge that [study participants](#) may have had more severe disease and therefore more persistent eczema.

"In conclusion, symptoms associated with AD seem to persist well into the second decade of a child's life and likely longer. ... Based on our findings, it is probable that AD does not fully resolve in most children with mild to moderate symptoms. Physicians who treat children with mild to moderate AD should tell children and their caregivers that AD is

a lifelong illness with periods of waxing and waning skin problems," David J. Margolis, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, Philadelphia, and colleagues wrote in their *JAMA Dermatology* paper.

More information: *JAMA Dermatology*. Published online April 2, 2014. [DOI: 10.1001/jamadermatol.2013.10271](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamadermatol.2013.10271)

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