

# Researchers beat untreatable eczema with arthritis drug

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Researchers at Yale School of Medicine have successfully treated patients with moderate to severe eczema using a rheumatoid arthritis drug recently shown to reverse two other disfiguring skin conditions, vitiligo and alopecia areata. The study is evidence of a potential new era in eczema treatment, they report.

The research findings are published early online in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*.

Eczema (atopic dermatitis) is a chronic condition that causes severe itching and leaves the skin red and thickened. It can adversely affect sleep and quality of life. Standard treatments, such as steroid creams and oral medicines, commonly fail to relieve symptoms in patients with moderate to severe [eczema](#).

Based on current scientific models of eczema biology, assistant professor of dermatology Brett King, M.D. hypothesized that a drug approved for [rheumatoid arthritis](#), tofacitinib citrate, would interrupt the immune response that causes eczema.

In the new study, King and his colleagues report that treatment with the drug led to dramatic improvement in six patients with moderate to severe eczema who had previously tried conventional therapies without success.

During treatment all six patients reported significant reduction in itch as

well as improved sleep. The redness and thickening of the skin diminished, also.

"These individuals were not only very happy with the results, they also expressed a tremendous sense of relief at being comfortable in their skin for the first time in many years," King said.

King and fellow Yale dermatologist Brittany Craiglow, M.D., had previously shown that tofacitinib citrate regrows hair in patients with an autoimmune-related form of hair loss called [alopecia areata](#). They also published findings reporting the successful treatment of a patient with vitiligo, which can leave widespread irregular white patches all over the body.

The new study suggests that a change in the standard of care for eczema—a condition for which there is no targeted therapy—may be on the horizon, say the researchers.

"Eczema affects millions of children and adults in the United States," said King. "I'm hopeful we are entering a whole new era in treatment."

The researchers note that further research is needed to confirm the treatment's long-term efficacy and safety for eczema patients.

Provided by Yale University

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