

# **Eczema in children is increasing, but diet is not the cause: Avoiding foods may do more harm than good**

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## **Elimination diets can only help children who have food sensitivity**

The number of children who have [eczema](#) has risen - one in five children are now affected by this [skin condition](#), which is often associated with an [allergy](#). Researchers are not yet sure what is causing this growing problem. Many people believe that certain foods are responsible, or at least make the symptoms worse. However, in information published today, the German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in [Health Care](#) (IQWiG) stresses that [parents](#) should be cautious about eliminating important foods like milk from their baby's or child's diet. Elimination diets probably only help if the child has a proven food sensitivity or allergy. The Institute advises that most [babies](#) and [small children](#) with mild eczema will grow out of it, and parents will usually not have to change their family's eating habits. Parents can keep up-to-date with the latest research on preventing allergies at the Institute's website, [informedhealthonline.org](http://informedhealthonline.org).

## **The increase in eczema in children remains a mystery**

In the last few decades, the number of people with allergies has been increasing. One of the most common problems is eczema - a skin condition that causes redness and itching. Most of the small children who have mild eczema will grow out of it by the time they are teenagers. But for some, eczema will be a lifelong problem. Researchers still do not know what causes this common condition. However, researchers are making some progress on what can help prevent babies developing eczema and allergies. One of the myths has been dispelled: that diet is usually the culprit.

"Restricting children's diets can harm their health and growth, so parents need to be careful about acting on unproven theories about diet and eczema," said Professor Sawicki, the Institute's Director. "Trials have shown that eliminating foods like milk or eggs from the diet of small children with eczema probably only helps if they have proven food sensitivities. Formal allergy tests like skin prick and challenge tests done with your doctor can help you get a more reliable picture of whether or not a suspected food really is causing the problem."

## **Research knowledge on eczema in babies and children is growing rapidly**

Eczema can be made worse by allergens like pollen, as well as irritants like soap or woollen clothing, according to the Institute. "Research knowledge on eczema and allergies is growing quickly, so parents need to make sure that the information they are relying on is based on up-to-date evidence," commented Professor Sawicki.

For example, researchers are currently looking into the role of probiotics in the development of allergies in children, but the research here is still

in the early stages. Parents can reduce their child's risk of allergies by not smoking. The Institute monitors research results to identify new findings on allergy prevention.

Source: Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care

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