

Eczema Remedies

Eczema: a body's rebellion. A chronic condition that causes dry, itchy, inflamed skin, appearing red, cracked, scaly, or bumpy. A condition that demands attention, that cracks open your sandpaper skin until it bleeds. The redness, dryness, and itch that never ends. You tell yourself that somewhere, hidden among the dozens of treatments, there must be a cure. You tell yourself that if you just keep trying, one of them will work.

i. Allergy Test

They press metal needles into your baby skin, each prick followed by a small blue circle of ink. You stare at your arm as red welts bloom one by one, tiny warnings rising from beneath the surface. The nurse smiles at this “progress”. Your mother asks questions about pollen, dust, milk, pets—every possible culprit—while you stare at the angry dots spreading across your skin, realizing that your body reacts to everything, including the air itself.

ii. Green Jasmine Herbal Body Wash

The gel gleams translucent in your palm, a promise of gentleness. It smells like mint and soil, clean in a way that feels ancient, almost trustworthy. You rub it carefully across your arms, waiting for the sting that never comes, and for a brief, naive moment, you think that this might be the one that saves you. But by nightfall, the itch returns—stronger and sharper, mocking your temporary relief. You learn early that what doesn't sting will never save you.

iii. Steroids

Each new prescription feels like deceit disguised in white plastic tubes—they call this drug a balm, but it feels like a trick. The thin layer of cream smooths your skin for a week, maybe two, before the cracks come back deeper than before. You start reading medical forums and learn about withdrawal issues, side effects, dependency. You imagine your skin addicted to healing, desperate for another dose of relief.

iv. Dupixent

A thick needle piercing into your thigh, fire threading its way through your veins. Your dad counts out loud as he holds the plunger down—one, two, three—and rolls his eyes when you flinch. The clock ticks slower during those twenty seconds. When the liquid settles, your leg aches with the afterburn of medical optimism. You tell yourself this one is different, that science might finally overpower suffering.

v. Cortisol, coconut oil, hydrox-something

You start collecting bottles. Ointments, creams, and gels line your bathroom counter. You learn to follow routines the way others follow prayers—apply in circles, pat dry, repeat. You tell yourself this is self-care, but the creams smear across your cracked knuckles, evaporate off your skin, and the itch lingers.

vi. Cut a bob

The dermatologist says short hair will help your neck breathe. You sit in the chair as clumps of hair fall, the weight of each strand landing like small betrayals. You like it at first—it feels

lighter—but when you see yourself in the mirror, you miss how your hair used to fall over your shoulders, hiding the red patches blooming at your collarbone.

vii. Get rid of your jewelry

Metal irritates your skin, so you remove your earrings, your necklace, and the bracelet your mom got for your birthday. Without them, your reflection looks plain, stripped of shine. You tell yourself you do not need adornment, but it feels like your body has stolen beauty from you too.

viii. Stop using hot water when showering

Your pediatrician says that heat triggers inflammation, so you turn the faucet down until the water runs cold. But you live in New England, where the cold consumes you. The chill shocks you awake each morning, your breath fogging against the glass. Your hands tremble as you towel off, your skin both numb and still burning.

ix. Get rid of your pet bunny

The doctor says the fur is exacerbating the condition. You tell yourself you'll clean more, vacuum the carpet, and keep the lint roller by your bed. When you hold your bunny, his heartbeat drums against your chest, steady and trusting, and you wonder if your body could ever betray you enough to make you let him go.

x. Aijiu: a traditional therapeutic practice of moxibustion, which uses the heat from burning the dried mugwort plant on or near acupuncture points to relieve ailments

Your mother lights the moxa stick, the air filling with the scent of smoke and herbs. You hold the jade roller near your arms, feeling the warmth sear into your skin. She says this will balance your energy and can drive out disease. You want to believe her. The smoke curls over your wrists, and you think that maybe if you burn long enough, you'll finally feel healed.

xi. Cricket soup

Your mother spends two hundred dollars on dried crickets from a man who swears they'll cleanse your blood. She boils them for hours in her sacrificed pot until the house smells like something alive has died again. Their legs and wings float in the broth like lost relics, and your mother glides her spoon across the foam, skimming shells like fishing for miracles. She ladles a bowl for you, her eyes bright with faith, and you drink it because you want to believe too. The bitterness stays in your throat long after the soup is gone.

xii. Dr. Huang, acupuncturist

She greets you with warmth, charts your symptoms in looping handwriting, and tells you about the Yin and Yang. "Today is the hottest day of the year, at the tip of the cycle," she explains, "so your body is reacting to the heat." You and your mom chuckle because, with this logic, every day would be the hottest day of the year.

xiii. Phototherapy

You step into the tanning booth for the chronically unhealed. The air is thick and humming with ultraviolet radiation, and green light fills the space like liquid. You try to focus on the timer's ticking. Forty, thirty-nine, thirty-eight. When it ends, you peel off the UV-blocking goggles and

see red lines across your face, your whole face stinging and tight. Unredeemable blotches swell around your neck. This is proof that even light can hurt you. Back home, you fold your favorite scoop-neck tops to the back of the drawer, hiding the damage under collars and shadows.

xiv. \$50 gummies

Thirty berry-flavored placebos made of pearl power and powdered promises, gone before the month ends. It is not approved by any health organization. You take one every morning, chew slowly, and pretend the sweetness is doing something beneath your skin. The label talks about “radiance,” “hydration,” “visible results,” but all you feel is the soft ache of wanting to believe. The gummies dissolve before you can taste the doubt. Hope, you learn, comes artificially flavored.

xv. Sit in front of a Woozoo fan, turn it up to the highest power (the fifth), and sob

You sit in front of the fan and let it blow the tears back into the crevices of your eye. The cool air numbs you. After, you sweep dead skin cells into the trash. You have already shed everything away. What else is there left to lose?

xvi. Air conditioning at 62°F

The house hums like a machine. Your dad complains about the electric bill, muttering that your comfort has become too costly. You pretend not to hear him and pull the blanket tighter, letting the air dry your skin into silence.

xvii. Icepack

You press it to your arms until the ache fades. The cold spreads slowly, dulling the itch but not erasing it. Nowadays, numbness is the closest thing you have to peace.

xviii. Diet

You scroll through eczema forums in the middle of the night, deep enough to find strangers recommending elimination diets and fermented vegetables. You cut out sugar, dairy, gluten, and everything bright. You tell yourself you'll last a month, but you only last three days.

xix. \$2000 serum from Guangzhou

A distant relative swears by it. Your parents spend their savings without hesitation. The bottles arrive wrapped in gold foil, promising purity and rebirth. You apply them carefully, feeling knives of sting spread under your skin. You throw your textbooks across the room, fists clenched, face buried in the pillow. You wish you could tell your parents you're sorry for not getting better, for wasting their hope.

xx. Wait for nighttime, for the day to be over, for sleep to take away your pain

You lie on your back, your fingers wrapped in gauze, arms covered in plastic to prevent you from scratching. The room smells faintly of ointment and desperation. The fan hums softly, the air cold against your cheeks. You close your eyes, but sleep doesn't come easily. Somewhere in the dark, your skin still burns. You wonder if the body remembers pain the way it remembers language—if healing ever arrives, will you even recognize it?