

## **Some Dietary Advice to Support Skin Health**

Eczema is a multi factorial condition that is increasingly recognised as an allergic disorder; a hyper sensitive reaction on behalf of the immune system to allergens in our environment. These allergens can be dietary, especially in children.

The factors that contribute to the condition are many and varied and will be unique to each sufferer. Whilst an individual assessment taking into account full health and diet history is always optimal, sound dietary changes introduced and made over a period of time have been shown to be effective in managing the condition.

The three main processes that underlie the condition are now accepted and well understood. The following guidelines aim to address and support these processes and may help towards eliminating or reducing severity of symptoms, while at the same time improving overall health and immunity:

### **Food allergies and intolerances**

Food allergies have long been recognised as a major factor. True allergies are instant and can be life threatening. Common ones are dairy, gluten, peanut and egg protein that can be identified by a skin prick test.

Food intolerances however can be harder to identify. They develop over time, response can be delayed and takes place in the digestive system. By keeping a food diary you can observe if any foods or food groups appear frequently in your diet (eg dairy, yeast or wheat) and potentially identify foods that may be the cause of an intolerance. Many of the neurotransmitters that exist in the brain also exist in the gut (termed the 'gut brain' in this area of research). This means the 'feel good' foods that we really enjoy may be the foods that are exacerbating our symptoms. There are a variety of food intolerance tests available but a food diary costs nothing and can reveal a great deal.

### **Inflammation**

Eczema is an inflammatory condition. A diet that contains oily fish 2-3 times a week is an excellent source of protein that can be used as a substitute for meat and contains the essential fats (EFA'S) that exert anti-inflammatory effects in the body. Fish oil (Omega 3) can be taken in supplement form and when combined with GLA (borage oil) has shown to reduce skin inflammation, dryness, scaliness, and itch in eczema sufferers. Nuts and seeds also contain these beneficial fats and can be used as snacks.

# purepotions

for skin that needs help

## Digestion

The Digestive System and the Immune System are inextricably linked (the 'gut-immune system'). Colonies of bacteria exist in the gut as an important part of this system. When an imbalance occurs (dysbiosis), the immune response is heightened. While the use of probiotic supplements can help restore the balance of bacteria in these colonies, good digestion is dependent on a diet that includes large amounts of fruit and vegetables as well as being rich in fibre and antioxidant nutrients.

Sugar in the form of sweets and refined carbohydrates negatively impacts all these systems, robs us of valuable nutrients and is best kept to a minimum or used occasionally as treats. This includes concentrated fruit juices that are high in sugar and should always be watered down or avoided.

In chronic cases the health history is often complex and treatment needs to be more patient specific. In these situations working one to one with a Nutritional Therapist can be effective and rewarding, especially if used alongside adjunct therapies such as homeopathy and aromatherapy.

## Christina Robilliard

Christina Robilliard is a registered Nutrition Therapist and Naturopath and practices at the Dolphin House Clinic in Brighton.

