EVERYDAY MEDICINE
WITH DR. MICHAEL BLAHUT

Top 3 Root Causes of Eczema: A Functional Medicine Guide

Eczema is not just a skin condition. From a functional and integrative medicine perspective, eczema is a visible signal of deeper immune system imbalance, gut dysfunction, and environmental overload. When the immune system becomes overwhelmed or misdirected, the skin often becomes one of the primary organs through which inflammation is expressed.

Rather than suppressing symptoms, the goal is to identify and remove the root cause while supporting the body's natural healing systems. Below are the three most common root causes I see clinically, along with the testing that helps identify them.

Root Cause #1: Food Triggers and Immune Reactivity

Food sensitivities are one of the most common drivers of chronic eczema. Gluten and wheat are frequent offenders, not only because of the gluten protein itself, but due to how modern wheat is grown and processed. Wheat is often heavily contaminated with glyphosate and other agricultural chemicals, as well as fillers and preservatives found in processed foods.

These exposures disrupt the intestinal lining and interfere with immune tolerance. When the gut barrier becomes compromised, partially digested food proteins can enter the bloodstream and trigger delayed immune reactions. Over time, this immune activation often manifests through the skin as itching, redness, flares, and chronic inflammation.

Beyond gluten and wheat, other common food triggers include eggs, dairy, and certain leafy vegetables that are high in oxalates. In sensitive individuals, oxalates can contribute to immune irritation, inflammation, and impaired skin barrier repair. The gut and skin are deeply connected through the immune system, and when gut inflammation is present, the skin often reflects that imbalance.

To identify food-related immune reactions, I often recommend IgG food sensitivity testing through Mosaic Diagnostics.

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IgG Food MAP Sensitivities Test (Mosaic Diagnostics):
https://labs.rupahealth.com/store/storefront_GRmLWl4?storefrontProduct=strprod_MPjKRKO

Root Cause #2: Environmental Chemicals and Toxin Exposure

Environmental chemical exposure is another major and often overlooked contributor to eczema. These exposures commonly come from personal care products, cleaning supplies, fragrances, laundry detergents, synthetic dyes, plastics, and the off-gassing of furniture, flooring, and building materials within the home.

These compounds place a significant burden on the liver and detoxification pathways, disrupt hormone signaling, and dysregulate immune function. When the body becomes overloaded and cannot efficiently eliminate toxins, the skin often becomes an alternative route of elimination, leading to chronic rashes, irritation, and inflammatory skin conditions.

Tap water can also be a hidden contributor due to chlorine, chloramines, heavy metals, and chemical byproducts. Even daily low-level exposures can accumulate over time and contribute to immune reactivity and skin inflammation.

To reduce daily chemical exposure, I often recommend using the Environmental Working Group (EWG) database to evaluate personal care and household products.

Environmental Working Group (EWG):
https://www.ewg.org

To identify internal chemical burden, I commonly use a comprehensive urine toxin test.

Total Tox Burden Test (Vibrant Labs – includes mycotoxins):
https://holisticfamilycare.wellproz.com/patient/product/66017

Root Cause #3: Mold and Mycotoxin Illness

Mold exposure and mycotoxin illness are frequently missed contributors to persistent eczema. I often see this pattern in individuals who are eating a clean diet and have already minimized chemical exposures, yet their skin symptoms continue or worsen.

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Mold can be hidden in homes, workplaces, schools, or past environments and may not always be visible or detectable without proper testing. Even low-level or intermittent exposure can significantly impact immune regulation.

Mycotoxins produced by mold can disrupt immune balance, impair detoxification, damage mitochondrial function, and increase systemic inflammation. When these toxins accumulate, the skin commonly becomes one of the primary sites of inflammatory expression.

To assess mold and mycotoxin burden, I recommend urine mycotoxin testing.

Vibrant Labs Total Tox Burden Test (includes mycotoxins):
https://holisticfamilycare.wellproz.com/patient/product/66017

RealTime Labs Mycotoxin Urine Test:
https://labs.rupahealth.com/store/storefront_GRmLWl4?storefrontProduct=strprod_OKoQwZx

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Healing Eczema from the Inside Out

While topical treatments can offer temporary relief, lasting resolution of eczema requires identifying and addressing the underlying root cause. In practice, this often includes targeted gut support, immune modulation, and detoxification strategies, along with gentle topical support to calm the skin while healing occurs internally.

When the root cause is removed and the body is properly supported, the skin has the ability to repair and rebalance naturally.

If you would like personalized guidance, testing interpretation, and a structured functional medicine plan, I offer one-on-one consultations.

Learn more about my credentials and practice:
https://holisticfamilycarepa.com

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