Fish in Infant Diet May Be Linked to Decreased Risk of Eczema

by Pamela Jones, MA

Eczema is a type of inflammation of the skin. Flare-ups can cause patches of red, dry, itchy skin. While eczema rarely causes severe problems, it can be uncomfortable and create embarrassing patches. Genetic factors play a large role in who develops eczema, but avoiding irritants can help prevent flare-ups. In infants, the risk of eczema may be altered by exposure to pets and certain foods. The time period that certain foods are introduced may also play a role.

A study in Sweden investigated potential patterns between introduction of irritants and foods and the risk of eczema in infants 1 year old. The study, published in Archives of Disease in Childhood, found that early introduction of fish was associated with decreased risk of eczema.

About the Study

The prospective observational study collected information from questionnaires sent to 8,176 families in Sweden. The families were asked about development of eczema, food allergies, pets, types of food, and the time at which the infants were introduced to these. The results from the questionnaire found that 20.9% of the infants included had developed eczema by 12 months.

Of all the potential irritants studied, only fish was associated with a decreased risk of developing eczema. This was found in infants that had fish introduced by nine months of age.

How Does this Affect You?

This study is an observational study. This means that investigators only observe and record information but do not interfere. As a result, this study cannot confirm a cause and effect relationship. Instead, it can only suggest that a link may exist. The connection found here does not mean that you should give your child fish to avoid eczema, but it creates information to add to future studies. Information from several studies like this will help doctor's develop nutrition guidelines. Talk to your doctor about when to introduce different solid foods to your baby.

RESOURCES:

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology
http://www.aaaai.org/

The National Eczema Society
http://www.eczema.org/

SOURCES:


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