

Asteatotic Eczema







Asteatotic Eczema – Concise Step-by-Step Notes

Definition and Nomenclature

- Asteatotic eczema is a type of eczema that develops on **very dry skin**, typically affecting the **elderly**.
 - **Synonyms:**
 - *Eczéma craquelé*
 - *Winter eczema*
 - Characterized by a '**crazy-paving**' pattern on the skin, especially the **legs**.
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Epidemiology

Prevalence

- A study in Japanese elderly care home residents found a prevalence of:
 - **16.4%** in rehabilitation patients

- **41.2%** in long-term residents

Age

- Primarily affects **older adults**
- Incidence **increases with age**

Gender

- Insufficient evidence on gender predisposition

Ethnicity

- Affects **all ethnic groups**

Associated Diseases

- **Hypothyroidism (myxoedema)** may present with asteatotic eczema
- **Zinc deficiency** is also a potential cause

Pathophysiology

Key Predisposing Factors

1. Naturally dry skin or a lifelong tendency to chapping
2. Age-related reduction in skin lipids due to illness, malnutrition, or hormonal decline
3. Increased transpiration relative to environmental moisture levels
4. Loss of the epidermal water barrier in the stratum corneum

5. Frequent exposure to degreasing agents (*cleansers, soaps, solvents*)
6. Low environmental humidity, especially in winter months and with central heating
7. Repeated minor skin trauma leading to inflammation and disruption of lipid balance

Medications

- **Diuretics**
- **Cimetidine**

Environmental Triggers

- Cold, dry winds
- Indoor heating
- Excessive bathing

Clinical Features

1. Symptoms

- Intense irritation that worsens with **temperature changes**, particularly at **night**
- **Itching** and **burning** sensations

2. Appearance

- Dry, scaly, cracked skin with a **superficial crisscross pattern**
- **‘Parchment pulps’** – dry, cracked fingertips that retain indentations after pressure

- **Crazy-paving pattern (Eczéma craquelé)** – deep skin fissures, particularly on the legs
- In severe cases:
 - Fissures may bleed
 - Skin becomes erythematous with raised edges

3. Distribution

- **Legs, arms, and hands** are most commonly affected

4. Chronic Course

- Symptoms worsen in **winter** and improve in **summer**
- Chronic scratching can lead to **more widespread eczema**

Asteatotic Eczema – Complete Concise Notes

Differential Diagnosis

- **Nummular dermatitis:**
 - Coin-shaped eczematous plaques
- **Psoriasis:**
 - Well-demarcated plaques
 - Thick silvery scales

- **Ichthyosis:**

- Generalized scaling
- **Minimal/no inflammation**

- **Cutaneous lymphoma:**

- Consider in:
 - Extensive
 - Atypical
 - Treatment-resistant cases

- **Tinea corporis:**

- Annular lesions
- **Central clearing**

Nummular Eczema

How to Tell the Difference



Eczema

- ◆ Not contagious
- ◆ Dry, coin-shaped patches
- ◆ Allergy or irritation

VS

Unsure what it is

✔ **Get expert advice online at Neo**





Complications

- **Secondary infections:**
 - Due to **impaired skin barrier**
- **Nummular eczema:**
 - May develop on background of asteatotic eczema
- **Chronic persistence:**
 - Can lead to:
 - **Permanent skin changes** if untreated

Investigations

Clinical Diagnosis

- Based on:
 - **History**
 - **Physical examination**
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Laboratory Tests

- **Not routinely required**
 - Indicated only in:
 - **Generalized disease**
 - Suspected systemic causes
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Skin Biopsy

- Consider in:
 - Atypical cases
 - Treatment-resistant lesions
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Management

General Measures

Environmental Adjustments

- **Humidify indoor air**
 - Avoid:
 - Sudden temperature changes
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- Dry environments
 - Reduce exposure to:
 - Harsh soaps
 - Detergents
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Lifestyle Modifications

- Avoid:
 - Hot baths ? use **lukewarm water**
 - Apply:
 - **Emollients immediately after bathing**
 - Avoid:
 - Wool clothing (*irritant*)
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First-Line Treatment

Moisturizers (Emollients)

- **Cornerstone of therapy**

Types

- Lanolin-based creams
 - Paraffin-based creams
 - **Urea-based creams** (*improve hydration*)
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Soap Substitutes

- Reduce:
 - Skin irritation
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Topical Corticosteroids

- **Mild potency**
- Used for:
 - Inflamed areas



HYDROCORTISONE FOR ECZEMA

How It Works
and More



What It Does



**Reduces Corns
and Calluses**



**Exfoliates Scales
& Dead Skin**

Second-Line Treatment

- **Topical calcineurin inhibitors:**
 - Tacrolimus
 - Pimecrolimus
- Useful as:
 - **Steroid-sparing agents**

Third-Line Treatment

- **Phototherapy:**
 - Narrowband UVB
 - PUVA
- **Systemic immunosuppressants:**
 - Methotrexate
 - Cyclosporine
- **Oral corticosteroids:**
 - Short courses for severe flares

Adjunct Therapies

- **Antibiotics:**

- Oxytetracycline
- Clarithromycin
(for secondary infection)

- **Coal tar:**

- For chronic lesions

- **Wet dressings:**

- For:
 - Severely cracked skin

Prognosis

- **Chronic, relapsing condition**

Course

- Worse in:
 - **Winter**
- Improves in:
 - **Summer**

Outcomes

- Untreated:

- May become **persistent/permanent**
- Early treatment:
 - **Excellent improvement with hydration therapy**

Conclusion

- Asteatotic eczema is a **common condition in elderly individuals** with dry skin
 - Core management:
 - **Barrier repair + hydration**
 - Prevention:
 - **Humidity control + regular emollients**
- ? Early intervention is key to **prevent chronicity and complications**