

Eczema in older people is often due to low levels of key nutrients. This may be because the diet is deficient or because the gut is no longer working efficiently, or both. The herbalist's approach to adult eczema is usually fourfold:

1. Dietary advice about which foods to avoid/reduce and which to increase (see table below)
2. Herbs to improve the health of the gut to increase the absorption of nutrients and to reduce the absorption of toxins
3. Herbs to improve the blood supply to the skin to improve the delivery of nutrients and the removal of toxins
4. Herbs to improve the elimination of toxins through the gut and urinary tract.

Zinc and vitamin B are particularly important as they affect the metabolism of essential fatty acids. Essential fatty acids are important in the regulation of a range of inflammatory responses, including skin eruptions such as eczema.

A high percentage of people with eczema have low levels of Omega 3 in relation to Omega 6 and should therefore increase their intake of foods such as cold-water fish and flax-seed oil.

Reduce or avoid	Eat/drink plenty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meat</li> <li>• Full-fat cheese and butter</li> <li>• Sugar</li> <li>• Alcohol</li> <li>• Caffeine: coffee, cola, ordinary tea</li> <li>• Additives and refined ingredients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Omega-3 oils: cold-pressed hemp seed, flaxseed</li> <li>• Cold water fish: salmon, herring, halibut</li> <li>• Fruit and vegetables</li> <li>• Beta-carotene: carrots, beetroots</li> <li>• Nuts and seeds</li> <li>• Water, fruit juice, herb tea, redbush tea</li> </ul> <p>Foods high in zinc: <span style="float: right;"><u>mgs per 100g</u></span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oysters <span style="float: right;">148.7</span></li> <li>• Pumpkin seeds <span style="float: right;">7.5</span></li> <li>• Ginger root <span style="float: right;">6.8</span></li> <li>• Pecan nuts <span style="float: right;">4.5</span></li> <li>• Dried split peas <span style="float: right;">4.2</span></li> <li>• Brazil nuts <span style="float: right;">4.2</span></li> <li>• Whole wheat/rye/oats <span style="float: right;">3.2</span></li> <li>• Peanuts <span style="float: right;">3.2</span></li> <li>• Almonds <span style="float: right;">3.1</span></li> <li>• Walnuts <span style="float: right;">3.0</span></li> <li>• Hazel nuts <span style="float: right;">2.4</span></li> <li>• Peas <span style="float: right;">1.6</span></li> <li>• Turnips <span style="float: right;">1.2</span></li> <li>• Parsley/potatoes <span style="float: right;">0.9</span></li> <li>• Garlic <span style="float: right;">0.6</span></li> </ul>

If there is an associated food intolerance (such as gluten or dairy) or an overgrowth of *Candida albicans*, a specific diet for these conditions is likely to help the skin condition.