ATOPIC ECZEMA

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ECZEMA IN WESTERN MEDICINE

“Eczema” from Greek “ἐκζεμα” = “to boil”

This relates to the idea of eczema as a disease with not only Blood Heat, but also an abnormal metabolism of fluids under the skin.

This accords well with the Chinese view of eczema.

Eczema (often also referred to as dermatitis) takes many forms including the following:

- Erythematous eczema
- Papular eczema
- Vesicular eczema
- Pustular eczema
- Erosive eczema
- Asteototic eczema
- Crusting eczema
- Desquamative eczema
- Seborrhoeic eczema
- Nummular eczema
- Atopic eczema
- Varicose eczema
Eczema is categorized as:

1. Exogenous (contact):

- **allergic**
  - Allergy to nickel in buckle

- **irritant**
  - Irritated by soap

- **photoreaction**
2. Endogenous

*atopic*

*seborrhoeic*

*nummular (discoid)*

*venous (gravitational, stasis)*

*pompholyx*
3. Unclassified:

*asteatotic*

*lichen simplex*

*juvenile plantar dermatosis*
Papule
Heat or Damp-Heat at Qi level

Pustule
Toxic Heat

Vesicle
Dampness or Damp-Heat

Bulla
External Wind
I shall concentrate only on atopic eczema (atopic dermatitis)

“atopy” from Greek ατοπία = “alien”

This is a reference to the triggering of diseases by alien substances (allergens).

Atopy includes collectively a certain group of diseases including allergic asthma, atopic eczema (or “dermatitis”) and allergic rhinitis.

Atopy is not a disease, but a tendency to develop an atopic disease.

Nearly a third of the population is atopic, but not all will develop asthma, eczema or allergic rhinitis.

However, those who do develop one of those diseases, come from that third of the population.
Atopic eczema is the most common type of eczema

It is a chronic, inflammatory skin disease which usually starts in early childhood, with 85% of children improving by the start of puberty.

There are three distinct age groups, with different characteristics:

1) Infantile Phase (1 month – 2 years)

- scalp
- cheeks, forehead

Spreads to the trunk and limbs in a few cases.
2) Childhood Phase (3-12 years)

- antecubital fossae
- popliteal fossae
- wrists, neck
- ankles
3) Adolescent and Adult Phase (12-20s)

- Antecubital fossae
- Popliteal fossae
- Anterior and lateral aspects of the neck

Well-demarcated dry lesions, with subsequent pigmentation

Hands may develop lesions after contact with irritants.