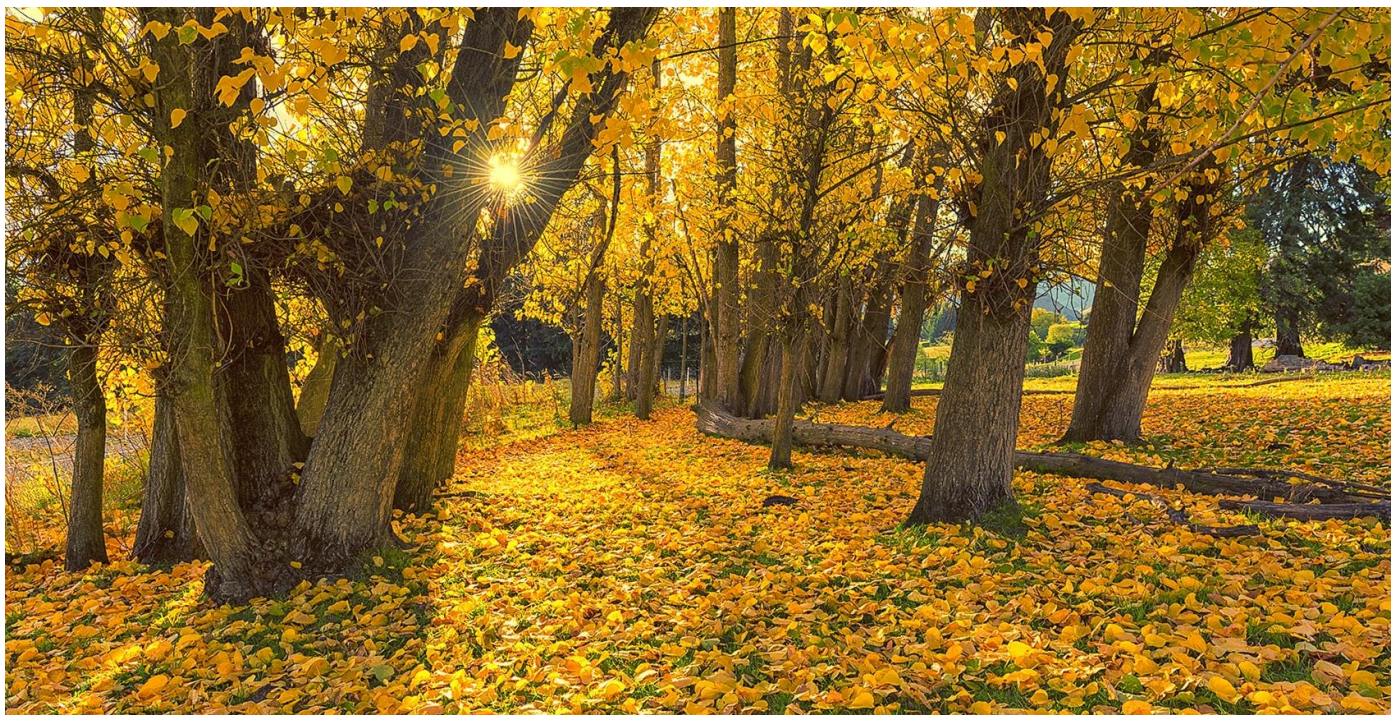


## Autumn Skin Tips



If you are one of the unlucky New Zealanders who suffer from eczema, as the summer fades and cool weather sets in, you often see an increase in symptoms. A change in the season and cooler weather can bring a whole new set of challenges. Cold, dry weather saps skin of essential moisture and can cause serious issues for skin that is already compromised. Itching and inflammation can lead to a breakdown in our body's main line of defence, our protective skin barrier. Flares cause intense itching, redness and can lead to infection when dry skin cracks open or scratching causes breaks in the skin.

Here are a few tips to help protect your skin this Autumn, so you stay comfortable and itch free:

### **Manage your indoor environment**

While you don't have control of the weather and temperatures outside, you can control the temperature in your home. Not overheating your home and drying out the air by using a humidifier can help keep reduce the chance of a flare up.

### **Avoid over-washing & frequently washing your hands**

Your hands can become dry, chapped and cracked during the cooler weather. Limit washing your hands to when it is necessary as over-washing or scrubbing your skin can cause your skin to dry out and crack. When you do wash your hands, use soap free hand wash or moisturiser. Liberally apply moisturiser after washing your hands. If your hands do become dry, use a thick cream or ointment moisturiser before bedtime and wear cotton or bamboo gloves while you are sleeping to help seal in the moisture.

### **Switch to a heavier moisturiser**

During the warm, humid summer months you might find that a moisturising lotion works fine but as the weather cools, it might not be enough. Switch to a thick cream or ointment moisturiser for areas that are severely dry. Liberally apply your moisturiser when your skin is damp after a shower or bath to help seal in the moisture from the water. Ask your Pharmacist for samples of your favourite products so you can always carry moisturiser with you. Regular moisturising of your skin is essential to managing eczema.

### **Lower the temperature in your shower or bath**

Limit showering/bathing to 5 to 10 minutes and use warm, not hot, water. Hot water can dry out the skin and help cause cracking. Use a soap free cleanser or hypoallergenic shower/bath oil that is less likely to irritate sensitive skin. Avoid scrubbing and pat the skin dry not rub.

## **Know your triggers**

Not everyone has the same triggers for eczema. Pay attention to what in your environment might cause a flare. Some people find allergens, dry air, cold wind, scented products, dust mites or household cleaning chemicals cause their eczema to flare. By understanding your triggers, you can take steps to prevent the flare.

## **Wear layers**

During a transition from one season to another, weather can be unpredictable or rapidly change during the day. For example, it might be cold in the morning but warm by afternoon, or it could be nice in the morning and later be windy and cold. Instead of dressing only for the morning, wear layers so you can add or take off a layer depending on the temperature throughout the day.

## **Use sun protection**

Summer might be over but there are still dangerous UV rays that can cause a sunburn or irritate your skin. Apply suitable sunscreen every morning before leaving the house.

## **Pay attention to Autumn allergens**

Pollen is still in the air during the autumn months. In addition, allergens such as mould and mildew might be more prevalent, especially in damp weather. Take time to change filters on heating systems before starting them up to reduce the chance that turning on the heat will send allergens into the air in your house.

## **Drink plenty of water**

As the weather cools, you might not feel thirsty but your body still needs water. Staying hydrated helps keep your skin moisturised.

## **Treat flare ups promptly**

When you notice the first signs of an eczema flare, treat it accordingly. Use topical steroids and moisturisers to manage the itch and discomfort and continue treating it until it is completely healed. Not treating eczema can lead to broken or cracked skin, which can lead to infection.

Sometimes eczema flares up and causes intense inflammation, itching and irritation that over-the-counter products can't remedy. It's time to consult your dermatologist, allergy and asthma specialist or your family doctor. You may need a prescription medication to help treat and heal your eczema.

*This article was obtained from the following sources:*

*[www.healthcentral.com/article](http://www.healthcentral.com/article)*

*[www.theraplex.com/blog-news](http://www.theraplex.com/blog-news)*

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