

Financial woes may worsen eczema symptoms
Survey reveals stress triggers flare-ups in three out of four
Canadians with eczema



Toronto, February 5, 2009 - Most people experience stress on a regular basis, and worrying about the impact of our troubled economy doesn't help. The added stress that financial struggles may cause could have serious repercussions for people with eczema, as stress often triggers flare-ups of this chronic skin condition that affects more than two million Canadians - of which 12 to 25 per cent are children.

Emotional factors - including stress - were reported to be the most common cause of flare-ups in three out of four eczema sufferers, according to a new survey on eczema in Canada. The Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE[®]) Program conducted a national online survey of eczema sufferers, which was developed in consultation with Edmonton-based dermatologist Dr. Marlene Dytoc. The survey is a follow-up to the 2005-2006 survey also conducted by the EASE Program.

The survey results also revealed that for half the respondents, flare-ups occurred most frequently during the winter. Chilly, dry air and indoor heating can dehydrate the skin and cause eczema flare-ups, which makes this an especially difficult season for eczema sufferers.

"While we may not be able to prevent stress from occurring, especially during the winter, it is important for people with eczema to do what they can to reduce their stress levels," says Dr. Marlene Dytoc, an Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine in the Division of Dermatology and Cutaneous Sciences of the University of Alberta. "Reducing stress and having a positive attitude can help keep eczema under control," adds Dr. Dytoc, who analyzed the survey results with medical student Paul Kuzel.

Dr. Dytoc recommends getting regular exercise, practicing relaxation techniques (like yoga or meditation) and taking part in enjoyable activities as ways to help manage stress. "People with eczema should also make sure to eat well and maintain an effective skin care routine to keep symptoms under control," she explains.

- Eczema was reported to have far-reaching effects on sufferers' lives, with adults reporting attempting to conceal their eczema as being their biggest concern (36 per cent). Other major concerns were problems concentrating at work or school (29 per cent), being unable to sleep at night (28 per cent) and difficulty playing certain sports (27 per cent).
- Difficulty sleeping at night was the primary complaint for children (43 per cent). Other issues for young eczema sufferers were the impact of eczema on their family activities (38 per cent), as well as hiding their eczema (23 per cent).

To provide quality education on eczema and to address the needs of those affected by the condition, the EASE Program (www.eczemaCanada.ca) offers a variety of educational resources for eczema sufferers, parents of children with eczema, friends and family members, which can be downloaded free of charge. The EASE Program, a four-time winner of the Canadian Dermatology Association's Public Education Award, has been recognized by experts in the field of dermatology as the source for credible, medically-reviewed information and educational support on eczema for Canadians.

For more information about eczema or the EASE Program, visit www.eczemaCanada.ca. Parents, teachers and young children can also visit www.pennysworld.ca - a fun, child-friendly website that aims to help children understand eczema.



Press Release

About the Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE[®]) Program

The Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE) Program is a national and fully bilingual patient education program developed with the assistance of leading Canadian dermatologists to provide access to useful and accurate information about eczema. Supported through an education grant from Astellas Pharma Canada, Inc., the EASE Program has been recognized with four Public Education Awards from the Canadian Dermatology Association (2003, 2004, 2005, 2007).

For more information and to book interviews contact:

Communications MECA

416-425-9143 or 1-866-337-3362