



# Top Eczema Diets Explained:

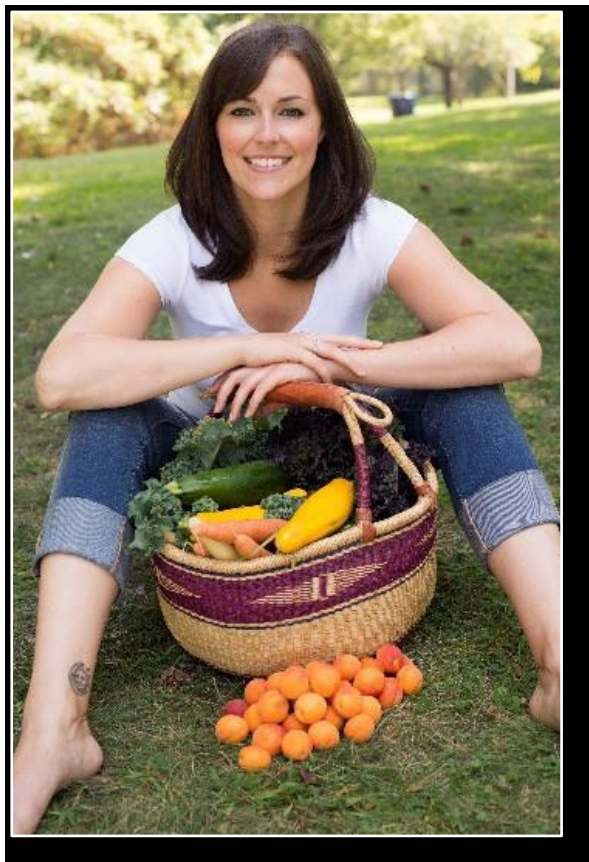
Find Out If Food Triggers YOUR Flare-Ups



## Table of Contents

About The Author	3
Intro	4
Gut And Psychology Syndrome Diet (GAPS)	5
Autoimmune Paleo Diet (AIP)	6
The Hypoallergenic Diet	7
The Gluten-Free / Casein-Free Diet (GF/CF Diet)	8
FODMAP Diet	9
Candida (Or Anti-Candida) Diet	10
Conclusion	11
Disclaimer	12
Resources	13





## About the Author

Sarah Maughan is a Registered Holistic Nutritionist with a special focus on gluten-free diets and allergies. She has successfully implemented a hypoallergenic program to address multiple health issues, including eczema. Her home is in Toronto, but she consults with individuals and families worldwide over the phone and using Skype. Sarah's approach to nutrition makes eating well an easy, enjoyable, and encouraging experience. She cares about helping individuals and families to make positive changes to feel better. You can find many allergy friendly recipes on her website:

[www.sarahmaughan.ca](http://www.sarahmaughan.ca)

## Find & Follow Sarah Online

Twitter

Facebook

Pinterest

## Intro

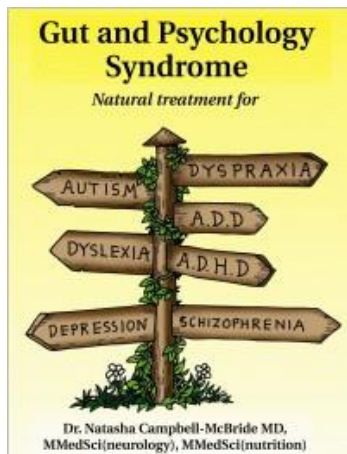
Eczema is a generalized skin irritation caused by genetic, immunological, and environmental factors. Since there are many types of eczema or dermatitis—atopic, contact, seborrheic, discoid and varicose—there are a lot of varying treatments and ways of managing eczema as well. It's common to seek relief with topical creams, or minimize the use of irritating skin care products, to help treat or prevent eczema. However, if we look deeper, we often find that food can also play a part in preventing and healing eczema flare-ups, especially with atopic dermatitis. We've all heard the phrase "what goes in must come out," but this applies to more than just your digestive system. In fact, our skin is one of the largest detoxification organs we have, so naturally we see excretions on our skin that originate from inside the body. Eczema can also be triggered by seasonal allergies, environmental or animal allergies, laundry and cleaning products, stress, excessive heat or cold. Food allergies, sensitivities or intolerances, an overall poor digestive system, an excess of bad gut bacteria, and a weak immune system can all contribute as well.



To help you sort through the weeds of tangled information out there with respect to nutrition and eczema, this document contains a description of six of the most common dietary approaches to managing the issue. Each description includes a brief introduction, a description of the food involved, some pros and some cons, and a recommended timeline for each diet. As always, the best and most effective approach to any condition is to seek professional advice and guidance, particularly when it comes to removing food from or adding supplements to a child's diet. However, certain adults may feel comfortable implementing dietary changes for themselves. This document is for informational purposes only and is not meant to serve as a medical authority regarding each dietary approach.

Since food often plays a part in eczema, it is important to note the difference between food allergies versus food sensitivity versus food intolerance. A food allergy is diagnosed with a history of reactions and an IgE blood draw or skin prick test. With an allergic reaction, a person may experience any combination of immediate immune responses—hives, itching, difficulty breathing or swallowing, etc. When more than one bodily system reaction occurs, it is considered anaphylaxis, which can be fatal if not treated at once. Food sensitivity is diagnosed with a history of reactions and sometimes an IgG blood draw. A person who suffers from a food sensitivity may experience more long-term systematic issues—eczema, ADD, and autoimmune disorders. Food intolerance is diagnosed with a history of reactions, but not usually a blood test. With food intolerance, a person may experience bloating, fatigue, heartburn and other digestive type disorders. It is a difficult process to come to a clear diagnosis, and often the lines are blurred between food sensitivities and intolerances, because the symptoms often are not noticed right away. However, a food allergy is different because reactions are immediate. It is very important to note that a negative IgE food allergy test result does NOT mean that a particular food is harmless to your body. The food may not be a true allergen for you, but it could be a food sensitivity or intolerance, in which case one of these diets could greatly assist you. If you or your child have a diagnosed IgE food allergy, particularly if it is accompanied by anaphylaxis, please do not attempt to reintroduce any known allergic food or any of its derivatives at home as it is not safe to do so without your physician's approval.

## Gut and Psychology Syndrome Diet (GAPS)



The Gut and Psychology Syndrome diet was developed by Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride. It is based on the idea that there is a connection between the gut and the brain, and that leakage in the gut can lead to autoimmune reactions/conditions, autism, allergies and nervous system issues within the body. The purpose of the diet is to rebalance the gut with microflora (good bacteria) and to seal the lining to prevent the immune and nervous system reactions from happening. These kinds of reactions may be related to eczema, which many times manifests due to food particles leaking from the gut and reaching our largest detoxification organ—the skin. Dr. Campbell-McBride recommends beginning with an introduction diet and then doing the full GAPS diet with a tapering off phase at the very end. The introductory diet (nicknamed “Intro”) involves six stages and is very restrictive. It begins with consuming homemade broth with vegetables in stage one, then you

gradually introduce certain foods as you continue through the stages—eggs, then fermented sauerkraut juice, then ghee/clarified butter, fermented dairy (if tolerated) and so on, before attempting the full GAPS diet protocol.

### Foods to Include

Organic, pastured, grass-fed animal fats, organs, and meat as well as broth made from the same animals, organic pastured chicken eggs, vegetables (regular and fermented), organic dairy from grass-fed animals (regular and fermented), coconut products, ghee, lentils, some beans, nuts, seeds, fruit, with raw honey and dates as sweeteners, etc. Food must be of the highest quality, and organic is strongly suggested.

### Foods to Exclude

All grains (gluten containing, such as wheat, rye, etc. & non-gluten containing, such as quinoa, rice, buckwheat, etc.); sugar (only raw honey and dates are allowed); starch (potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn starch, etc.); most beans; artificial food dyes; additives (chewing gum) and preservatives.

### Pros

The GAPS diet removes all refined, processed and artificial food from your diet, which is beneficial for your health but difficult to accomplish. The instructions are very specific, and it is not meant to be a lifelong diet. The diet aims to heal underlying health concerns beyond eczema—mainly the breakage of the intestinal wall. There is clinical significance, but not much scientific evidence in the GAPS diet. However, because of its emphasis on gut bacteria and probiotics, both of which have been heavily studied in regard to eczema, the diet has a possible role in healing eczema [1, 2, 3, and 4].

### Cons/Warnings

Some young children may not enjoy drinking broth/soup multiple times during the day with little other foods. Their energy could become taxed, especially if they are active, and the diet will restrict them socially. Implementation requires strategy and planning, as there are multiple stages and monitoring, so it may be best to implement when a child is out of school for the summer or has minimal items on his/her schedule. For a child under the age of 12, please ensure that you have medical supervision and awareness, as there is a period of reduced caloric intake and decreased variety of food, which can have negative implications for growing bodies.

### Length

A few months to years. Dr. Campbell-McBride recommends a minimum of six months and says generally 1.5 – 2 years. The time on the more difficult Intro portion of the diet depends entirely on the body's reactions as foods are introduced, although children tend to heal faster than adults.

## Autoimmune Paleo Diet (AIP)

The Autoimmune Paleo diet is similar to GAPS and the regular Paleo diet, but additional foods that often trigger inflammation or immune reactions are removed. Loren Cordain is the initial creator/founder of the Paleo Diet, but since his introduction, Anne Angeline and Sarah Ballantyne have developed the more specific autoimmune approach to Paleo. It's based on eating a hunter-gatherer diet to reduce overall inflammation, which can affect your immune system, hormones, digestive tract and overall health. Since the diet aims to improve the overall digestive system, it can help improve eczema as well.

### Foods to Include

Organic animal protein, lots of healthy fats (coconut, avocado, extra virgin olive oil, and virgin coconut oil), vegetables (regular and fermented), fruit (in moderation). Food must be of the highest quality, and organic is strongly suggested.

### Foods to Exclude:

All the usual non-Paleo foods (beans, dairy, grains gluten, soy, etc.) plus eggs, nuts, seeds, and nightshade vegetables.

### Pros

The AIP approach removes refined, processed and artificial foods, a choice which is generally healthy for everyone who applies it. The Paleo diet itself has been extensively researched with regards to inflammatory disorders and other gastrointestinal disorders, but this specific branch of the autoimmune approach has less research behind it. In addition, the diet is quite simple. There are very specific guidelines to follow, taking out a lot of guesswork and making it easier to implement on your own.

### Cons/Warnings

It can be very restrictive and children may feel deprived of their favorite foods. Children under the age of 12 should have medical supervision or awareness to avoid nutritional deficiencies or other health complications, however, there is no quantity restriction, so kids can eat when they feel hungry.

### Length

There is a food reintroduction phase that is only recommended when symptoms are in "remission" for a significant period of time, so the exact timeline of the diet can vary. Some foods may need to be kept out for the rest of your life, while others may be well tolerated eventually. This is not meant to be a lifelong diet, although some aspects of it could be followed forever.





## The Hypoallergenic Diet

This diet involves removing the topmost common food allergens due to the possibility of one or more of them being a skin irritant. Dairy, gluten, soy, and eggs are often linked to skin issues, so eliminating one or several of these foods may be a good starting place. This diet also helps to reduce inflammation and digestive irritation, which can be factors in eczema. There is no specific institution or person who owns the rights to the development of this diet and the top allergens may vary depending on what part of the world you live in, or on the practitioner who individualizes the diet for you.

### Foods to Include

Anything that does not include the allergens on the restricted list, although most nutritionists would recommend a clean unprocessed diet to accompany this.

### Foods to Exclude

The top allergens typically include gluten (wheat, non-gluten-free oats, barley, spelt, kamut, rye) dairy, eggs, soy, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish and sometimes corn, yeast, sugar, beef, pork and tomatoes. Anyone can be allergic or sensitive to any kind of food at all really, so this list could broaden depending on the individual and what part of the world you live in.

### Pros

Food quantity remains normal for this diet, as there is still a large variety of food and there is little risk of under-eating. It is generally easier to implement this diet, as the whole family can partake in recipes and meals without any difficulty. However, learning recipe substitutions for some of the most common allergens such as wheat and dairy may be time consuming and frustrating at first.

### Cons/Warnings

There are no specific guidelines for this diet except to avoid the top allergens, so it is often helpful to have a trained naturopathic doctor or holistic nutritionist develop the specific protocol for you. That way you have a plan in place with some recipes, meal ideas and a direction for you or your child. It may also be restricting, especially for children in social situations and they may miss foods they previously ate.

### Length

A minimum of four weeks to six months is commonly required before symptoms fully disappear; then there is a re-introduction phase where reactions are monitored. Some foods may need to be removed indefinitely; others can be added back into the diet if they can be successfully re-introduced without a negative reaction.



## The Gluten-Free / Casein-Free Diet (GF/CF Diet)

This diet involves removing all gluten and casein (a protein found in dairy) from the diet because they are two of the most common foods known to trigger health conditions in relation to the skin, the brain and the digestive tract. They also play a role in creating inflammation throughout the body, which can be seen in the form of eczema. There is no institution or individual that owns the rights to the development of this type of diet, although it is popular among parents of autistic children. There are many resources readily available about this diet. Since gluten and casein tend to always be among the top allergens, many people find these two may contribute to their eczema the most.

### Foods to Include

Any food that is free of gluten and casein, such as vegetables, fruit, unseasoned meats, beans, nuts, and seeds, gluten-free grains like brown rice, quinoa, buckwheat and millet.

### Foods to Exclude

Gluten (wheat, non-gluten-free oats, barley, spelt, kamut, rye); casein\* (dairy products such as milk, yogurt, cream, cheese, ice cream, milk chocolate); and all other sauces, baked goods, prepared foods and products that contain gluten or casein.

### Pros

It is an easier diet to implement because it involves only removing two major foods instead of a wide range of foods. The whole family can partake, and there is little to no risk of nutritional deficiencies or undereating as food quantity should remain the same. There are often enough quality recipe substitutions to help prevent your child from feeling deprived and there are many products on the market geared towards the GF/CF diet.

### Cons/Warnings

Since the diet's instructions are only to remove two of the common allergens, there is a chance that it may not be as effective for all individuals, since implementations of this diet may be vastly different. If no results are seen, you may need to further explore the other dietary approaches listed and seek additional support. Although highly processed foods are eliminated, please be aware that many GF/CF packaged foods can contain substituted ingredients that are not very healthy and should be consumed in minimal amounts (white rice flour, potato and tapioca starch, guar and xanthan gums, to name a few).

### Length

Suggested as a permanent lifestyle change.

*\*Please note that most non-dairy cheeses made from rice and soy still contain casein. Butter and ghee must be certified casein-free, otherwise they will contain trace amounts. It is best to ensure all food and products are listed as entirely "dairy-free" to ensure no trace amounts of casein.*





## FODMAP Diet

**F**ODMAP stands for Fermentable Oligo-Di-Monosaccharides and Polyols, which are certain carbohydrates (including fructose) found in foods that are difficult to digest due to the fact that they draw water to the intestinal tract causing discomfort if eaten in excess. Sometimes this is referred to as fructose intolerance. FODMAPs is used to address symptoms of IBS, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, but there are other health conditions the FODMAPs diet is used to treat, such as a host of digestive issues, inflammation (including eczema), sugar cravings and others.

### Foods to Include

All animal protein, low FODMAP gluten-free grains (quinoa, rice, oats—in small quantities), nuts and seeds, unsweetened milk alternatives, certain fruits (bananas, berries, grapes, pineapple), certain vegetables (cucumber, bell peppers, botchy, celery, leafy greens), lactose free dairy, butter, olive oil.

### Cons/Warnings

It requires some memorizing of which foods contains FODMAPs and which don't since it's not as simple as removing all fruit or dairy. There are no other guidelines except to consume low FODMAP food, with no mention of improving digestive health in order to be able to tolerate them in the future.

### Foods to Exclude

All foods containing fructose (certain fruit, honey) lactose (found in dairy), frusta's (wheat, onions, garlic), gelatins (beans, lentils, soy), polyols (sugar alcohol sweeteners, avocado, apricots, cherries, nectarines, peaches, plums) and extremely high fiber foods in general.

### Length

Length can vary. Resources state anywhere from 4 – 8 weeks on a low-FODMAPs diet and individual reintroductions can begin to determine tolerance. Certain foods may need to be eliminated indefinitely if they are not well tolerated after the reintroduction.

### Pros

It's not as restrictive as some other diets because you don't necessarily need to remove all of a category, for example, all fruit. It's possible to still have a balanced diet throughout, and the goal is to limit or reduce your intake of FODMAP foods, not necessarily eliminate them completely.



## Candida (or Anti-Candida) Diet

The Candida (or Anti-Candida) Diet is used to eliminate an overgrowth of yeast, otherwise known as *Candida albicans*, in the intestines and the body in order to allow good bacteria (probiotics) to flourish and improve your overall digestive system and immune system. An overgrowth of yeast can occur if the diet is high in sugars (which feeds *C. albicans*), alcohol, and stress. Antibiotics are another major factor. Taking even just one round of antibiotics without replenishing with probiotics creates an environment to allow candida to grow rapidly. On the Candida diet, you must remove what causes yeast overgrowth (predominantly sugars), then replace those foods with more nourishing substitutes, vitamins/minerals, repopulate the intestines with good bacteria and then repair the intestinal environment. By reviewing the foods to include and exclude, you may notice some similarities to the AIP diet.

### Foods to Include

Green vegetables, fish, beef, poultry, eggs, wild game meat, nuts/seeds (except those excluded and then only in moderation), avocado, coconut, extra virgin olive oil, butter, ghee, nut and seed flours and butters (in moderation).

### Foods to Exclude

Sugars, certain carbohydrates like fruit (cherries and berries in extreme moderation for certain individuals), all forms of sugars and sweeteners, grains and grain based flours (gluten-free and gluten based), high starch vegetables, juices, alcohol, vinegar, pickled foods, smoked foods, yeast, condiments, beans, soy, mushrooms, bean sprouts, anything fermented, yogurt, all cheese, peanuts, pistachios and cashews due to mold potential.

### Pros

As mentioned previously, the role of probiotics and having good intestinal bacteria plays a large role in the management of eczema. It is easier to know whether you could benefit from the Candida diet by looking at your history with yeast. For example, if you or your child have experienced chronic vaginal yeast infections, jock itch, ringworm, thrush in the mouth, thrush on the nipple, excessive smelly and painful gas, tinea versicolor, athlete's foot, or other fungal infections in the body and/or on the skin, you very likely have a yeast overgrowth in the body that is contributing to your eczema. These are all very common conditions related to yeast overgrowth.

### Cons/Warnings

Due to the very low carbohydrate potential of the diet, younger children may rapidly lose weight and those who are very active may lose stamina and energy for activities. There is also a "die-off" phase that happens when the yeast starts to be eliminated. One can experience diarrhea, headaches, fatigue, flu-like symptoms and feel generally unwell for a period of time until good bacteria starts to flourish. Children under the age of 12 should have medical supervision or awareness to avoid nutritional deficiencies or other health complications.

### Length

The length of the diet depends entirely on the symptoms and your commitment and adherence to the foods to be avoided. Typically, the longer you have had yeast issues in your body, the longer it will take to remove it and replenish your body with good bacteria. You can expect anywhere from 6 months to 2 years. In extreme cases, some individuals must stay on the diet for life.



## Conclusion

It may seem frustrating to know there are so many different dietary approaches to managing eczema. Unfortunately, there is not a “gold standard” with guaranteed results for all. Please remember that everyone’s eczema is triggered by a different combination of things (environment, food, seasonal, etc) and it takes finding the right combination of triggers to fully manage one’s eczema. Additionally, nutritional supplements, such as probiotics, vitamin D, cod liver oil and fish oil may also be necessary in combination with dietary and lifestyle changes.

Along with the individuality of triggers, the effects of dietary changes alone are very difficult to prove via a trial/study since it’s difficult to monitor the exact nutritional intake of hundreds of individuals, who must have an identical state of health and lifestyle in order to prove that anyone dietary change was effective. Nothing in nutrition is 100 percent, and the best evidence of what works is that of clinical significance. Practitioners will often see certain links, patterns and successes/failures inside their own clinic with their clients. I myself have seen eczema managed successfully in an adult with the hypoallergenic approach, in an infant when both mom and baby abstained from just dairy, and I have seen corn and soy act as major triggers for eczema as well. Although the dietary omissions were all different in these cases, the common ground was that these individuals each had to improve their digestive system through supplementation and better eating overall before they could see changes in their eczema. In each case it was only the food that varied slightly, which is why it can be helpful for you to choose a healthcare practitioner to help you find the right diet. Remember that results do not happen overnight, or even in a week—it takes time and patience, but it’s worth it. If you feel like the idea of food elimination is daunting, I suggest working from the bottom up, meaning start with eliminating the food you think is the easiest to remove, or the food you eat the most often, and then move forward. This will help ease yourself and/or your family into the changes. Adding more stress to your body by implementing sudden or drastic dietary changes will not help inflammatory conditions like eczema. Take it slow if you need to, and do what’s best for you and your family, because any action you take will be better than remaining where you are.

If at any point you feel lost, defeated, overwhelmed or blocked by picky eating, it’s best to reach out to a Registered Holistic Nutritionist (RHN) so he or she can help individualize the process for you through specific meal ideas or menu plans and help design individual plans for supplementation if necessary.





## DISCLAIMER

Sarah Maughan, Registered Holistic Nutritionist, is not a medical doctor and this book is not meant to replace medical advice. This is for informational purposes only and not for guidance regarding how to implement these diets. Sarah is not an advocate for any one dietary approach; she implements individual nutritional protocols for her clients based on each person's health history. She is not responsible for any adverse effects, illness, injury or emergency that may result from unguided implementation or implementation from healthcare providers that you may use. Sarah highly advises medical and nutritional supervision and guidance. It is important to also note that there is no single cure for eczema, but a specialized diet can be one part of a successful maintenance plan.

## Resources

1

**Probiotics: a role in the treatment of intestinal infection and inflammation?**[http://gut.bmj.com/content/50/suppl\\_3/iii54.full](http://gut.bmj.com/content/50/suppl_3/iii54.full)

2

**Probiotics and atopic eczema: a double blind randomized controlled trial**[http://adc.bmj.com/content/97/Suppl\\_1/A2.2.abstract](http://adc.bmj.com/content/97/Suppl_1/A2.2.abstract)

3

**Effect of Probiotics on the Treatment of Children with Atopic Dermatitis**<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3346910/>

4

**A protective effect of *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* HN001 against eczema in the first 2 years of life persists to age 4 years**<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2222.2012.03975.x/abstract>

5

**The Dietary Intake of Wheat and other Cereal Grains and Their Role in Inflammation**<http://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/5/3/771/htm>