

Research into silk clothing for the treatment of eczema

Professor Kim Thomas, from the Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology at the University of Nottingham, describes a new research study on whether children with eczema benefit from wearing silk clothing.

Specialist silk clothing has been promoted recently as a new treatment option for people with eczema, but it is unclear if these garments really do provide additional benefits for patients.

A high-quality, independent clinical trial is needed to establish whether or not these new products live up to the impressive claims that are currently being made. As a result, researchers at the University of Nottingham are about to conduct the first large-scale, independently funded, randomised controlled trial of silk clothing for the management of eczema in children. This trial has been funded by the National Institute for Health Research (the research and development arm of the NHS), and two clothing distributors have kindly agreed to donate the clothing for use in the trial.

If research can show that these garments provide additional benefits for patients, then this would be an important finding, and many eczema sufferers could benefit. Equally, if the research shows that the clothes provide no useful benefit, then patients and the NHS can save money by not using treatments that have been shown to be ineffective.

What is the trial about?

The trial will compare the use of silk clothing plus normal eczema care, to normal eczema care alone. Children enrolled in the study will be put into one of two groups. The first group will receive three sets of silk underwear – this will be either a bodysuit and leggings or a vest and leggings, depending on the child's age. The children will be asked to wear the clothing underneath their normal clothes, day and night for 6 months – if possible! Children who do not receive the clothing straightaway will be given the clothing to try for themselves for 2 months after the first 6 months of the trial have finished. Throughout the trial, all of the children will be free to continue with their usual eczema treatments, such as emollients and topical steroids.

Who can take part?

Children aged 1–15 years of age who have quite bad eczema will be eligible to take part in the trial. Recruitment is taking place in hospitals in five main areas – Nottingham, Cambridge, north London, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.

Each child will be enrolled in the trial for 8 months in total, and will be asked to attend their local recruiting hospital on four different occasions throughout the trial period. Children taking part in the trial will be asked to complete a weekly questionnaire at home so that they can tell us how the eczema has been, and how often the clothing has been worn.



What should I do if I would like to take part?

We are looking for 300 children to take part in the trial. Recruitment is due to start in November 2013 and will continue for about 18 months. Further details about the study can be found on the CLOTHES Trial website (www.nottingham.ac.uk/CLOTHES).

If you think that your child might be eligible and you would like to find out more, please contact the trial team by email at clothes@nottingham.ac.uk or you can phone the co-ordinating centre on 0115-884 4926 and ask to speak to the CLOTHES Trial Manager.

Other ways that you can help

If you are not able to take part in this trial, but would like to be involved in other ways, it would be great if you could help us by advertising the trial amongst your friends and family. Feel free to spread the word if you know of people who might be interested in taking part.

Who is conducting this research?

This trial is being led by Professor Kim Thomas from the Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology at the University of Nottingham, and will be co-ordinated from the Nottingham Clinical Trials Unit. It involves a large team of experts from across the country – including five universities and six NHS Trusts.

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Clothing supplies for use in the trial are being kindly donated by Espère Healthcare Ltd and DreamSkin Health Ltd.