FOR BIPOLAR I & II DEPRESSION IN ADULTS
CAPLYTA 42 mg (lumateperone) capsules
LET IN THE LYTE
Download the discussion guide >
MEDICATION GUIDE INCLUDING BOXED WARNING
Antipsychotic medicine is dangerous for when the dose is changed. Report any change in these symptoms to your healthcare provider immediately.

Medically Reviewed

How Atopic Dermatitis Shapes Daily Decisions

New research shows atopic dermatitis can influence everything from clothing and sports to social and romantic life.

Updated Oct 6, 2025 By: Rita Colorito
Medical Reviewer: Aaron S. Farberg, M.D.

Join the Discussion

Getty Images/Filmstax

Jump To: Findings | Severity | Outcome

Living with atopic dermatitis (AD)—the most common and challenging type of eczema—involves much more than dealing with itchy, inflamed, and uncomfortable skin. New research published in *Acta Dermato Venerologica* reveals that AD significantly influences the decisions people make daily that shape their futures. This groundbreaking study is the first to examine how AD affects both everyday decisions and long-term goals.

"Understanding how atopic dermatitis impacts daily life can help doctors provide better support and treatment, addressing not just the physical symptoms but also the emotional and social effects," the study authors explain.

Findings

Evidence of the Everyday Burden

Researchers in Granada, Spain, conducted a comprehensive study involving 104 adults living with AD. These participants averaged about 38 years old and had been managing their skin condition for an average of 20 years.

Using a validated assessment tool called the Major Life Changing Decision Profile, researchers examined how AD impacts decisions across five key areas: education, job and career, family and relationships, social activities, and physical activities. They measured impact using a scale from 0 (no impact) to 4 (significant impact).

The results paint a clear picture of how extensively AD influences daily choices. Clothing choice was the area most impacted by AD, with 52.9% of study participants reporting a moderate-severe impact. Other areas that stood out included lifestyle (48.1%), sports activities (41.4%), job performance (40.4%), national holidays and leisure (37.5%), social interactions (33.6%), family relationships (31.8%), romantic relationships (28.9%), educational performance (27.9%), travel abroad (25.9%), and job absenteeism (24%).

Dawn Davis, M.D., a dermatology professor at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, who was not involved in the research but reviewed its findings, says the study validates what she regularly hears from patients. They often describe AD as feeling like "pin pricks or wearing a wool sweater or suit of porcupine needles."

"You can't necessarily hide it, and it's hard to sit in skin that is uncomfortable. So, people end up trying to adapt and modify their lifestyle to a significant degree, to learn how to live with eczema," Dr. Davis explains.

Sign up for our monthly Eczema Newsletter.
Your Email...
GO
Your privacy is important to us.

People with AD often choose activities less likely to trigger flares. For instance, they might choose swimming over football or soccer, where heat and equipment friction can worsen symptoms. Dr. Davis compares this to how someone with asthma makes decisions to avoid triggering an attack.

The study found that 20% of participants were taking antidepressants or anti-anxiety medications. This doesn't surprise Dr. Davis, who notes that "patients with atopic dermatitis have a higher rate of using mental health medications and reporting symptoms of depression and anxiety than patients who don't have skin disease."

JiaDe (Jeff) Yu, M.D., the chair of dermatology at Virginia Commonwealth University in Henrico, VA, emphasizes that previous research has consistently shown AD's significant negative impact on various aspects of life. "We do know that atopic dermatitis tends to affect people's quality of life pretty dramatically. Especially with more severe their AD."

Severity

Severity Makes a Difference

The study revealed a clear pattern: The more severe the AD, the more profound its impact on life decisions. People with severe AD, compared to those with mild-moderate AD, faced significantly greater challenges in socializing with friends (48.6% vs. 26.1%), their love life (48.5% vs. 18.8%), sexual difficulties (34.2% vs. 13%), clothing choices (74.3% vs. 42%), and alcohol consumption (36.3% vs. 8.7%).

People with eczema on visible areas like their face or hands often struggle with new social or romantic relationships, Dr. Davis notes. Others sometimes worry the condition is contagious. "If your skin looks different, people are oftentimes hesitant to be intimate with you or touch your skin," she explains.

Study participants with severe AD also experienced more intense symptoms including itching, pain, depression, sadness, embarrassment, sleep disruption, and lack of confidence. Notably, they developed the disease earlier—around age 12 compared to age 21 for those with mild-moderate disease.

According to the National Eczema Association, while some children outgrow AD, those with severe symptoms at onset often live with chronic AD throughout their lives. In pediatric patients with AD, Dr. Yu says he sees many of these life-changing decisions taking shape, highlighting the need for early care and interventions.

Outcome

Better Care Begins With Asking Questions

The researchers acknowledge some limitations in their work. The study didn't include follow-up data, and participants came from a hospital unit that primarily treats severe cases, making it "difficult to generalize the findings to those treated in primary care or the general population."

Dr. Yu would like to see this research replicated in the U.S. to explore potential cultural differences and extended to children to identify challenges that can be addressed early. Regardless, both doctors and patients need to do better at discussing these life-impact issues, he says.

"Most dermatologists in their 10- to 15-minute visit are probably not broaching some of these subjects, even though they affect the patient greatly," says Dr. Yu. "If we are not directly asking the patient these questions, or if you're [the patient] not volunteering this information, then we might be missing it."

Making decisions because of AD can leave patients feeling isolated, Dr. Yu notes. "The study can help reassure patients that there is a community out there of people who feel similarly."

Dr. Davis hopes this research will raise awareness among non-dermatologists and empower people with AD to seek better care. She encourages people with AD to share these findings with their doctors, family, friends, and coworkers. "Data and knowledge is power," she says. "It gives us a starting point to educate others and also improve the needs of our patients."

Often, dermatologists focus primarily on symptoms they can treat with medication. Dr. Yu urges doctors to refer people with AD who are struggling with quality-of-life issues to therapists or social workers who "may have the tools to manage some of these other comorbidities associated with atopic dermatitis."

The study authors suggest that effective interventions should include multidisciplinary approaches integrating dermatological and psychological care: "Additionally, early intervention programs could play a crucial role in addressing symptoms promptly, improving emotional well-being, and minimizing the long-term psychosocial effects of AD."

Both doctors hope this study will spark further research on improving eczema treatment and management. Future studies are needed to validate these results across diverse populations and develop targeted tools for assessing and addressing major life-changing decisions in chronic diseases.

"It's really important that while we work on therapy to address eczema, that we practice whole-person care, to make sure that we appreciate the impact on someone's well-being, mental outlook and activities of daily living," says Dr. Davis.

This article was originally published September 22, 2025 and most recently updated October 6, 2025.

© 2025 HealthCentral LLC. All rights reserved.

Join the Discussion

SOURCES | Copy Link | Share | Print | Our Review Process

Rita Colorito, Health Writer: As a health journalist, Rita Colorito has covered topics ranging from anxiety disorders to the zika virus. She specializes in writing about cancer, heart disease, health care disparities, and mental health.

Aaron S. Farberg, M.D., Dermatologist: Aaron S. Farberg is currently a dermatologist and dermatologic surgeon at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas. He received his medical degree from the University of Michigan.

ADVERTISEMENT
FOR BIPOLAR I & II DEPRESSION IN ADULTS
CAPLYTA 42 mg (lumateperone) capsules
LET IN THE LYTE
Download the discussion guide >
MEDICATION GUIDE INCLUDING BOXED WARNING
having an allergic reaction (e.g., rash, itching, hives, swelling of the tongue, lip, face, or throat).
CAPLYTA may cause serious side effects, including:

Visit Our Eczema Community

More Like This

Eczema
Tips for Speaking Up at Your Dermatologist Visit?
Discussion

Chronic Health
HealthCentral's 2025 Chronic Health Innovator Awards Are Here!
Discussion

Eczema
Best Advice You've Received About Your Skin?
Discussion

Eczema
Influencer Opens Up About Eczema
Medically Reviewed
Discussion

Chronic Health
"How I Got My Doctor to Hear Me"
Medically Reviewed

Ask HealthCentral