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Eczema patients struggle with life restricting physical and mental impacts new survey finds

- *Eczema has a negative impact on daily life for one in two adult sufferers, with itchiness, pain and sleep deprivation commonly cited.¹*
- *97% of adults with eczema say it has a negative impact on their mental health, with low self-esteem, stress, depression and anxiety revealed as challenges.¹*
- *Almost two third of adults with eczema feel a sense of hopelessness with the number of treatments tried and doctors seen.¹*
- *Experts are meeting today to discuss options to improve access to timely and effective care for New Zealanders with eczema - the most common chronic inflammatory skin disease.²*

WELLINGTON NEW ZEALAND, 25 June 2024 – New Zealanders with eczema are caught in a relentless pursuit of relief from the life restricting physical symptoms, leading to frustration and a diminished quality of life, a new survey has found. The survey of 517 adults with eczema and 98 parents and carers is the largest survey on the lived experience of New Zealanders.¹ The survey was commissioned by the Eczema Association of New Zealand and AbbVie.

The physical symptoms of eczema like itchiness, raw, sensitive skin causing pain, discomfort and loss of sleep have a debilitating effect, with 51% of adults reporting that eczema has a moderate-to-significant negative impact on their day-to-day life.¹

Almost all adult respondents (97%) cited the negative mental health impact of eczema, with almost half (46%) reporting it to be significant or very significant. Low self-esteem (79%), stress (68%) and anxiety (59%) were common challenges experienced by adults.¹

Eczema Association of New Zealand spokesperson Vanessa Jenkins said she hoped these findings would prompt a wider level of public understanding, and compassion, for eczema patients.

“Eczema is often described as a hidden disease. But it has a very real physical, emotional, economic, and social toll on patients and their families.

“These data reveal the daily struggle for tens of thousands of Kiwis suffering from eczema. It’s a life characterised by pain, sleepless nights, personal and social anxiety, a deep sense of helplessness and loss-of-confidence from never being on top of the condition.”

Of those surveyed, 70% report their or their loved one’s eczema is not fully manageable or under control and this increases to 79% for adults with moderate-to-severe eczema. Three quarters of adults surveyed say they are not able to bring an eczema flare-up under control with available

treatments. On average patients try at least five different treatment options, and one in five people have tried more than 20 different treatments.¹

“Eczema patients face a depressing cycle of hope and despair. Hope with the initial promise of a new treatment, followed by despair when it stops working. It’s a cycle repeated many times over for New Zealanders with eczema,” Ms Jenkins added.

The survey found that 62% feel a sense of hopelessness given the number of treatments tried and doctors seen, while 84% feel frustrated by their inability to find an effective, long-term treatment.¹

Dr Scott Barker, Dermatologist, NZ Dermatology and Skin Cancer Centre said, “Once contact allergic dermatitis and specific alternative diagnoses have been excluded, then as there is no cure for eczema, the main goals in managing the disease are to reduce itch, minimise rash, and limit the impact on quality of life.”

Eczema is the most common chronic inflammatory skin disease.² In New Zealand approximately 212,000 adults and 193,000 children live with this recurring and non-contagious skin condition.^{3,4} About 20-40% of children diagnosed with eczema will continue to be affected as adults and live with the condition for most of their life. It is also more prevalent among Māori and Pasifika children compared with European/Pākehā children.⁵

More than half of the adult respondents (55%) have lived with eczema for more than 20 years. Seventy per cent said their eczema has a negative impact on relationships with friends while 62% reported negative impact on relationships with their spouse or partner.¹

Eczema impacts people’s ability to participate in employment and is associated with sick leave, changing jobs, and receiving benefits or pensions.⁶ The symptoms people experience can impact the use of their body that may be required for certain occupations, while the loss of sleep at night can make it difficult to concentrate at work.⁷ Four in five (80%) adults said eczema has a negative impact on their ability to work, and 68% felt it impacts their ability to fulfil work and career ambitions.¹

Bronwen Marshall, Country Head of AbbVie New Zealand said “This survey shows the impact of eczema on a patient’s quality of life, and their families, is profound and life changing.

“When you consider the lost time in the workplace, the impact at a country level is also significant. We estimate the productivity loss from workplace absences due to eczema to be up to \$299 million each year in New Zealand.*

“We’re proud to be partnering with the Eczema Association of New Zealand to help raise awareness of eczema and its toll on New Zealanders. Our hope is that improved public understanding of the disease helps to inform better support for eczema patients.”

Despite the significant impact eczema has on the lives of New Zealanders, people face challenges in accessing care and treatment. Waitlists for public dermatology services are long and cost can be a barrier for some accessing private dermatology services. Currently, there are

*This estimate has been calculated using the Human Capital method with data from a cohort of NZ patients (n=40),⁸ median hourly wage⁹, population statistics¹⁰, and estimated AD prevalence¹¹. This calculation was made with the best available information; however, accuracy may be affected by data limitations and assumptions made.

also no reimbursed advanced treatment options for people with moderate-to-severe eczema in New Zealand.

The Eczema Association of New Zealand and AbbVie will today be hosting a roundtable of medical, government and academic experts to discuss the findings of the survey and options to improve access to timely and effective care, particularly for those who live with moderate and severe eczema.

-Ends-

About the *Living with Eczema* survey

The *Living with Eczema* survey was undertaken by the Eczema Association of New Zealand (EANZ) and AbbVie and funded by AbbVie. The online survey was conducted by Elbow, an independent market research consultancy. The survey was distributed to EANZ members and promoted to the general public via social media. Participants were surveyed between 19 December 2023 and 1 March 2024. As a convenience sample was used, results may not be generalisable to the New Zealand population.

About AbbVie

AbbVie's mission is to discover and deliver innovative medicines that solve serious health issues today and address the medical challenges of tomorrow. We strive to have a remarkable impact on people's lives across several key therapeutic areas: immunology, oncology, neuroscience, eye care, virology, and gastroenterology, in addition to products and services across its Allergan Aesthetics portfolio. For more information about AbbVie, please visit us at www.abbvie.co.nz. Follow at our [Facebook](#), or [LinkedIn](#) page.

About Eczema Association of New Zealand

The Eczema Association of New Zealand (EANZ) is part of an independent not-for-profit Australasian wide organization. The Eczema Association of Australasia (EAA) was founded in 1994 as a non-profit registered charity and relies on memberships and donations along with corporate sponsors to achieve its aims. EANZ supports and educates eczema sufferers and carers, along with the wider community, in all aspects of eczema and its impact. For more information visit: <https://www.eczema.org.nz/>

Issued on behalf of AbbVie and EANZ by Blackland PR.

To request an interview with Dr Scott Barker, Dermatologist, NZ Dermatology and Skin Cancer Centre or Vanessa Jenkins, Eczema Association of New Zealand spokesperson please contact: Fiann Blackham, fiann@blacklandpr.com, 022 150 7689

A copy of the report is available here on request.

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AbbVie New Zealand (AbbVie Ltd)
156-158 Victoria Street
Wellington
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