

From: info@aquathin.com [mailto:info@aquathin.com]

Sent: Friday, January 09, 2009 5:07 PM

Subject: UK STUDY SHOWING BENEFIT OF SOFTENED WATER AGAINST ECZEMA

Importance: High

Dear Aquathin Europe Family Members;

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Water softener study may bring relief for eczema sufferers



Baby Dylan before (top) and after the water softener was installed

Thu, Jan 8, 2009

A Department of Health-funded study into the effect of hard and soft water on the skin condition eczema is being carried out at the University of Portsmouth

The University is looking for children with moderate to severe eczema aged between six months and 16 years to take part in a clinical trial to find out if installing a water softener at home improves their condition.

Eczema affects up to 20 per cent of school children in the UK. The most common symptoms include dry, reddened skin that itches or burns which can lead to oozing lesions but most treatments only suppress the condition and can have unwanted side effects.

It has been reported to be more common in hard water areas such as Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, but no-one really knows why. The study will investigate if eczema in children can be improved by fitting a device to soften all the water in the home apart from a single tap in the kitchen for drinking. The devices will be fitted free of charge for the duration of the study and families who take part in the trial can buy them at a reduced cost.

Anne-Marie Crawford-Flanagan has just finished the trial with her 15 month old son Dylan who suffered from such severe eczema he needed to be wet wrapped from head to toe in bandages.

She said: "The eczema meant Dylan had bleeding sores and wouldn't sleep for more than an hour without waking up to scratch. We had about a dozen different creams on prescription and I was at my

wit's end. Less than two weeks after the softener was installed there was a dramatic improvement. Now there's barely a mark on him. He's a completely different baby."

If the trial is successful, it could mean an improvement to the lives of millions of sufferers.

Professor Tara Dean, Director of Research at the School of Health Sciences and Social Work and who is leading the study, said:

"Eczema is reported to be less common in areas of soft water and there is anecdotal evidence which suggests that sufferers who already have a water softener installed see a reduction in their symptoms.

Carrying out a proper clinical trial will help prove if this is the case. If water softeners are found to improve the symptoms of eczema it will be a breakthrough for both patients and doctors.

For some it may be as simple as reducing their dependency on pharmacological treatments such as steroids and creams. Softening the water also reduces the amount of detergent needed for washing clothes which can be a major irritant for eczema sufferers."

Volunteers will be assessed to see if they are suitable and their homes will be checked to see if a softener can be fitted to the water supply. Those taking part in the trial will be examined at a nearby hospital by a specially trained nurse who will score the severity of their condition and 'map' the pattern of their eczema. The nurses will not be informed which patients are using the water softener.

The children (or their parents) will be asked to complete a daily diary to record their eczema symptoms and they will be issued with a small computerised wristband to monitor their level of night-scratching while they are asleep.

"People with eczema tend to scratch more while sleeping without realising they are doing it. We can monitor the amount they scratch to see if it reduces during the period their water is softened," said Professor Dean who is also the Deputy Director of the David Hide Asthma and Allergy Research Centre on the Isle of Wight.

While any region of the body may be affected, eczema typically occurs on the face, neck, and the insides of the elbows, knees, and ankles. In infants eczema typically occurs on the forehead, cheeks, forearms, legs, scalp, and neck.

The children have three follow up examinations during the 16-week study period to see if there has been any improvement to their skin and to their quality of life. Throughout the study period children continue to use their normal eczema treatment.

The study is funded by the Department of Health (NIHR Health Technology Assessment Programme) and is being coordinated by the University of Nottingham Other study centres are open in Boston, Lincoln, Nottingham, Leicester, Cambridge and London.

If you would like further information about taking part in the trial, please contact:

The Softened Water Eczema Trial team at the David Hide Asthma & Allergy Research Centre,
Telephone (01983) 534178.

For more information see www.swet-trial.co.uk

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