

Hopes of a cure for eczema as cause is found

By Sarah Knapton SCIENCE EDITOR

A CURE for eczema may be on the horizon after scientists found what triggers the debilitating skin condition.

Around one in 10 adults and 20 per cent of children in Britain suffer from a complaint that causes the skin to become itchy, red, cracked and painful.

Until now, doctors could only treat the symptoms, but Newcastle University has found that a missing protein called filaggrin is responsible.

Nick Reynolds, professor of dermatology at the university, said: "We have shown for the first time that loss of the filaggrin protein alone is sufficient to alter key proteins and pathways involved in triggering eczema. This research reinforces the importance of filaggrin deficiency leading to problems with the barrier function ... and predisposing someone to eczema."

The Newcastle team created a model of human skin lacking in filaggrin and found that without it the skin became inflamed, damaged and lacking cell structure. In fact, removing filaggrin triggered exactly the same pathways in the skin that occur with active eczema.

This researchers say the finding will help them design drugs which can boost protein production and prevent the condition occurring.

Nina Goad, of the British Association of Dermatologists, said: "Given the level of suffering eczema causes, this is a pivotal piece of research."

The study was published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

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