



What is Scleroderma?

Scleroderma is a rare but chronic condition that is **characterized by the hardening of skin and connective tissues** – it literally means hard skin. It belongs to a group of arthritic conditions known as connective tissue diseases in which an individual's antibodies are directed against his or her own tissues. There are two types of scleroderma – localized and systemic scleroderma. Localized scleroderma usually begins with dry patches of **skin on the hands or face which progressively becomes thicker and harder**.

Systemic scleroderma, on the other hand, **affects the blood vessels and internal organs such as the heart, lungs**, kidneys, lungs, esophagus and gastrointestinal tract. Scleroderma most commonly occurs in people aged between 30-50 years and affects women more than men. There is no known cure for scleroderma and often this condition leads to depression and low self esteem.

The symptoms and signs of scleroderma include:

- Thickening and hardening of the skin
- Discoloration of the skin
- Numbness, color changes and pain in cheeks, nose, ears, fingers and toes due to abnormal sensitivity to cold (Raynard's phenomenon)
- Swelling, stiffness or pain in joints, especially in fingers
- Sores over joints
- Digestive problems such as bloating, swallowing or abdominal pain
- Sexual dysfunction
- Dry eyes coughing
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Shortness of breath and

What Causes Scleroderma?

The exact cause of scleroderma is not known. Scleroderma is a result of the overproduction of collagen in body tissues and researchers believe that the immune system plays a role in the development of this disease. The immune system mistakenly attacks its own cells which causes inflammation and **an overproduction of collagen**. It is also believed that genetic and environmental factors may also contribute to the development of scleroderma. Industrial and pharmaceutical chemicals such as silica dust, some plastic materials or rapeseed oil have been linked to scleroderma.



The content of this ebook is intended for informational purposes only.

It is not intended to diagnose or treat any medical condition. Nothing in this ebook is intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this ebook or on ANY website.

Diagnosing Scleroderma

Diagnosing scleroderma can be very difficult especially during the early stages because it is often mistaken for other connective tissue diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis or lupus. Your physician will perform a physical examination as well as review your medical history. During the examination, the doctor will **check for color changes in your skin, whether there are hardened and thickened** areas in the skin and feel for any changes in the joints and tendons. Additional tests which include blood tests, a skin biopsy, chest x-ray, MRI or CT scan may also be performed to determine the [diagnosis of scleroderma](#).

Help for Scleroderma

While there is no [cure for scleroderma](#), a variety of treatment options can ease the symptoms of this condition. Individuals have to avoid developing infections and it is most likely that doctors will therefore administer an annual flu and pneumococcal vaccine. Topical medications such as **moisturizers or corticosteroids** are used to treat [localized scleroderma](#).

If [localized scleroderma](#) progresses to a large area of the body such as an arm or leg, oral medications may also be prescribed. Various medications such as **antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, calcium-channel blockers**, immunosuppressants or ACE inhibitors are used to treat the symptoms of [systemic scleroderma](#) – improve circulation, control high blood pressure, reduce swelling and inflammation, promote digestive function and prevent kidney damage.

If symptoms become severe, **surgery may be required** to repair intestinal wall or stomach damage. Sometimes, infected fingers or toes may have to be amputated and in rare cases a kidney, heart or lung transplantation may be performed.

Alternative treatment options such as biofeedback and acupuncture are effective in **easing the symptoms of scleroderma** and releasing stress and anxiety. In addition, certain lifestyle changes such as eating smaller, well balanced meals more frequently, exercising regularly, avoiding exposure to cold, stress and smoking can also make a significant difference in an individual's quality of life

Natural remedies

Natural and alternative treatments may also be used in combination with prescription medicine to reduce the [symptoms of scleroderma](#). Herbal and homeopathic remedies have proven to be highly effective in **supporting skin health** and healthy lymphatic functioning.

Well known herbs such as Galium aperiene (Cleavers) and Trifolium pratense (red clover) act as a cleansing tonic, lymphatic cleanser and blood purifier for the skin. Homeopathic ingredients such as Natrium muriaticum, Kalium muriaticum and Kalium sulphate help to **maintain a well-hydrated skin and support the natural healing** and regenerative processes of the skin.

More Information on Scleroderma



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Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

Although scleroderma is a life-long disease, there are several ways to help you to manage your symptoms

- Eat high fiber foods and eat more, smaller meals throughout the day that will not aggravate stomach problems
- Avoid foods that cause heartburn or gas
- Protect your joints by not placing too much strain on them – avoid lifting heavy objects or doing strenuous household chores
- Exercise regularly to help keep your joints flexible and improve circulation as well as overall health and wellbeing
- Keep your body warm and protected from cold air by wearing a hat, scarf, gloves and boots
- Moisturize the skin with fragrance and alcohol free skin products particularly designed for [dry skin](#)
- Install a humidifier in your home to keep the air moist
- Educate yourself on the disease and keep up to date on information and services
- Join a support group where you can share and express your feelings and experiences with others
- Get adequate rest during the day and sleep at night
- Stay close to family and friends
- Stop smoking as it causes your blood vessels to narrow permanently
- Reduce stress levels by learning relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation or yoga
- Maintain a positive attitude and a commitment to moving forward with life

The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is ‘better’ than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called ‘alternative’ or

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‘complimentary’ medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term ‘holistic’ medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are ‘unproven’ and ‘untested’, the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called ‘standardized’ extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While ‘standardized’ extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete



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This includes formulation, acquiring and testing of raw ingredients as well as final manufacturing. This gives us the confidence to say that when you are buying a Native Remedies product, you are buying the safest and the best! We know what goes into our remedies - which is why we know what you will get out of them!

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