

PITYRIASIS ROSEA



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A common skin disorder with a faint rash that lasts weeks to months. *Pityriasis* means “scaly” and *rosea* means “pink” in Latin. It affects all ages, but is most common in adolescents and young adults. Women are affected more often than men are.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- A faint rash (often found in skin creases) of oval or round, pale-pink or light-brown areas. One larger patch (the “herald patch”) may appear first. They may evolve into a “Christmas tree” pattern on the chest or back.
- Mild fatigue.
- Itching, usually mild.
- Occasional slight fever and headache.

CAUSES

Unknown, but may be caused by a virus or autoimmune disorder. It does not appear to be highly contagious (easily spread from one person to another).

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Fall and spring seasons.
- Weak immune system due to illness or drugs.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Cannot be prevented at present.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Pityriasis rosea usually runs its natural course in 5 weeks to 4 months. No drug or treatment is available to shorten its course, but itching and discomfort can be relieved. New rash areas continue to break out for several weeks. Once over, it is unlikely to recur.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Affected skin areas may have color changes in darker-skinned persons.
- Rarely, bacterial infection may occur in affected skin.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider can usually diagnose the disorder by an exam of the affected skin. Medical tests may include blood studies. A scraping of the skin or a sample of the skin may be removed for viewing under a microscope.
- No specific treatment will cure the disorder.
- Treatment can help relieve the itching. In more severe cases, treatment with ultraviolet light or moderate exposure to sunlight may be recommended.
- Bathe as usual with a mild soap. Use warm water, as hot water may increase the itching. Oatmeal baths may help.

MEDICATIONS

- For minor discomfort, you may use nonprescription drugs, such as:
 - Calamine lotion, to decrease itching.
 - Steroid cream, to control more severe itching.
 - Acetaminophen, to reduce fever.
- Other topical or oral steroids and antihistamines may be prescribed.

ACTIVITY

Avoid activities that cause excess sweating. This can make the rash worse.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member has symptoms of pityriasis rosea.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page