

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.

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.

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 to examine 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 medications, such as:

- Calamine lotion, to decrease itching.
- Steroid cream or oral steroids may also be prescribed to reduce inflammation and decrease itching.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription today.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription tomorrow.

↳ Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your or steroid prescription, even if you start to feel better.

↳ Steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.

Your doctor also recommends the following over-the-counter medications. These medications may offer significant symptom relief:

- For fever or pain use acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
(Acetaminophen and ibuprofen may also be alternated every 3 hours for persistent fever or pain.)
- Antihistamine