

Pityriasis

Pityriasis is a common, benign, self-limiting skin rash. It most often develops in the spring and fall and more often in adolescents and young adults. The rash can last from several weeks to several months. The cause of pityriasis is uncertain, although current research is suggesting a viral cause. It is not believed to be contagious.

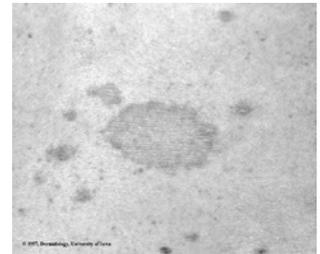
The earliest and most common symptom of pityriasis is a large, oval, scaly, pink patch on the chest or back which is called a “herald” patch. Within a week or two, more patches appear on the chest, back arms, and legs. These patches often form a pattern on the back resembling a Christmas tree. Patches may also appear on the neck, but rarely on the face. These patches are usually much smaller than the “herald” patch. Some people may experience itching with pityriasis, especially if the skin is warm (ie: after bathing, exercising). The rash usually fades after 6-8 weeks, but may last much longer.



About half the people who develop pityriasis rosea have signs or symptoms of an upper respiratory infection — such as a stuffy nose, sore throat, cough or congestion — just before the herald patch appears.

Healthcare professionals will diagnose pityriasis by careful history and physical examination. The rash may resemble those caused by some fungal infections, so careful examination is needed.

Pityriasis often requires no treatment and it goes away by itself. However, some healthcare professionals may choose to provide medications for itching. These may be topical (used directly on the skin) or oral (typically antihistamines).



These steps may help you relieve the discomfort of pityriasis rosea:

- Bathe and shower in lukewarm water
- Take an oatmeal bath. These are available at the pharmacy.
- Use zinc oxide cream or calamine lotion on the rash.

The rash usually fades without leaving any permanent marks. But, if you have dark skin, long-lasting flat, brown spots may remain after the rash has healed.

If the rash lasts more than 3 months, contact your healthcare professional.

Sources and/or additional resources:

Web MD: <http://www.webmd.com/genital-herpes/default.htm>

Family Doctor.org: <http://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/tc/pityriasis-rosea-topic-overview?page=2>

Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/pityriasis-rosea/DS00720>

Family Doctor.org: <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/skin/disorders/808.html>

National Institutes of Health: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000871.htm>

If you are a registered Millersville University student and you have questions or you need to make an appointment, please call Millersville University Health Services at 871-5250.