

# Pityriasis Rosea

## **What is pityriasis rosea?**

Pityriasis rosea is a skin rash. This rash usually affects people between the ages of 6 and 30 years.

The rash has the following features:

- The herald patch looks irritated and is 1 to 3 inches across.
- The herald patch has a scaly, raised border and a pink center.
- A widespread rash of smaller matching spots on both sides of the body occurs 7 to 14 days **after** the herald patch first appears.
- This rash consists of pink, oval-shaped spots that are 1/4 to 1/2 inch across. The spots are covered with fine scales, which give the rash a crinkled appearance.
- The rash appears primarily on the chest, abdomen, and back. Often it is worse in the groin and armpits. Usually the rash does not appear on the face.
- The rash can be itchy during the first one or two weeks.

## **What is the cause?**

The rash is probably caused by a virus, since we know it is not a bacteria, fungus or allergy that causes it. Oddly it doesn't appear to pass from person to person.

## **How long does it last?**

This condition is harmless. The rash disappears without treatment. The different parts of the rash last from 6 to 10 weeks. During this time no particular ill-effects are experienced.

## **How is it treated?**

- **Skin creams**  
In general treatment is unnecessary. If the skin is dry, a moisturizing cream may be helpful. For itchiness, use 1% hydrocortisone cream (no prescription necessary) two or three times a day..
- **Sunlight exposure**  
One dose of ultraviolet light can stop itching and shorten the course of pityriasis. Have your patient sunbathe for 30 minutes (enough to make the skin pink). Do this only once. If this is impossible, use a sun lamp or consider a tanning salon. CAUTION: Avoid sunburn.
- **Contagiousness**  
Pityriasis is not contagious. You can attend school and take gym.

## **When should I call the doctor?**

Call your **Caring Family** doctor during office hours if:

- The rash becomes very itchy.
- The rash becomes infected with pus or draining scabs.
- The rash lasts longer than three months.
- You have other questions or concerns.



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