

PITYRIASIS ROSEA

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A non-contagious, inflammatory skin disorder (especially of the chest and abdomen) with a faint rash that lasts weeks to months. It affects all ages but is most common in adolescents and young adults.

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.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Fall and spring seasons.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Cannot be prevented at present.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

- Pityriasis rosea usually runs its natural course in 5 weeks to 4 months. No medication or treatment is available to shorten its course, but itching and discomfort can be relieved.
- The skin eruptions won't leave scars unless complicated by a secondary infection. New rash areas continue to break out for several weeks. Once over, one episode seems to confer lifelong immunity.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Secondary bacterial infection of the rash area.

TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Treatment is focused on relieving the itching.
- Bathe as usual with a mild soap. Use warm water, as hot water may intensify the itching. Oatmeal or Aveeno baths may help. You don't need to sterilize the tub or shower after bathing.
- Exposing the skin to moderate amounts of sunlight, may decrease the rash.

MEDICATION

For minor discomfort, you may use non-prescription drugs, such as:

- Calamine lotion to decrease itching.
- Steroid cream to control severe itching (a rare symptom).
- Acetaminophen to reduce fever.
- Other topical steroids and/or antihistamines may be prescribed.

ACTIVITY

Usually no restrictions.

DIET

No special diet.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF..

THE FOLLOWING OCCUR:

- Fever over 101 degrees F (38.3C).
- Signs of infection (warmth, redness, tenderness, pain and swelling) in the rash area.

Student Health Center



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