



Pityriasis Rosea

What is pityriasis rosea (PR)?

Pityriasis rosea is a common harmless skin rash usually occurring between the ages of 10 and 35, but it may occur at any age. It may occur at any time of the year, but is most commonly seen in the spring and fall.

What causes pityriasis rosea?

The cause is unknown but experts suggest that a virus is the most likely culprit. It does not seem to spread from person to person.

What are the symptoms?

PR often starts with one large pink scaly patch called a herald patch. Days to weeks later, salmon-colored oval patches appear on the abdomen, chest, back, arms, and occasionally the neck but rarely the face.

Patches are often vertical and form a pattern resembling a Christmas tree.

Occasionally there may be mild itching.

It usually disappears within 6 to 8 weeks but can last up to several months.

How is PR treated?

There is no treatment that shortens the duration of PR. It usually goes away by itself. When it is bothersome you may use skin lotions, lubricants, or oatmeal baths.

Try an over the counter 1% hydrocortisone cream for small, itchy areas. Nonprescription oral antihistamines such as Claritin® or Benadryl® may relieve itching.

In cases of severe itching your clinician may prescribe stronger topical steroid cream.

If the rash lasts longer than 3 months, see your clinician.