



# *Pityriasis Rosea*

PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

## **What is pityriasis rosea?**

Pityriasis rosea is scaly, reddish-pink skin rash. It is most common in children and young adults.

A single scaly red spot may appear on your back or stomach. This is called a “herald patch.” Smaller spots will develop on your body, one to twenty days later. The rash may itch badly. If the rash is on your back, it may have the shape of a Christmas tree. Though mostly on the trunk, it may spread to the thighs, upper arms and neck. It usually avoids the face, though sometimes a few spots spread to the cheeks. Second attacks of pityriasis are rare.

## **What cause pityriasis rosea?**

The cause of pityriasis rosea is uncertain. Some providers believe that pityriasis rosea is caused by a viral or bacterial infection. Pityriasis rosea is not contagious, and people with this rash do not have to be kept away from other people.

## **What conditions look like pityriasis rosea?**

The rash of pityriasis rosea can look like eczema, ringworm, or psoriasis. Infection with syphilis also can cause a similar rash. If your provider wonders if you might have syphilis, he or she will order a blood test.

## **How long does pityriasis rosea last?**

Pityriasis rosea usually lasts one to three months. It always disappears by itself. Let your provider know if the rash or itching lasts longer than three months.

## **How is pityriasis rosea treated?**

The rash usually goes away on its own and does not leave a scar. No treatment can cure it, but medicine can relieve your itching. Your provider might have you use antihistamine pills, a steroid cream, calamine lotion, or zinc oxide cream. Sometimes people with pityriasis rosea have to take steroid pills. The rash of pityriasis rosea is irritated by soap; bathe or shower with plain water. This rash makes the skin dry; it helps to put a thin coating of bath oil on your freshly dried skin after a shower or bath.

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