

# Pityriasis Rosea

Pityriasis rosea is a common rash in children and young adults. It usually looks like round or oval scaly pink/brown patches and occurs mainly on the chest and back, although the rash may appear at other places as well. Itching occurs sometimes. Pityriasis rosea usually goes away without any specific treatment, but it may take several weeks to clear up completely.

## What is pityriasis rosea?

Pityriasis rosea is a common rash in teens and young adults, although it may occur in younger children. The cause is unknown—infection with a virus may be involved. The rash usually begins gradually, with a single “herald patch,” followed by a more widespread rash on the back, chest, and abdomen. Other patterns are possible.

## What does it look like?

- Before the rash develops, your child may have symptoms of a cold or “flu,” such as fever, aches, and swollen glands.
- The rash often begins with a herald patch—a single pink or brown circle or oval up to a few inches in size. The spot is scaly with raised edges.
- Five to ten days later, smaller round or oval spots develop, usually on the trunk, shoulders, and upper thighs. Less often, the rash may spread to the face and scalp and further down the arms and legs or may appear only in those areas. New spots come out over a few days.
- These new spots are also pink/brown with scaly, raised edges, like the herald spot. Less often, the spots may just be bumps.

- The spots tend to follow certain lines of the skin, which can result in a typical pattern on the back or chest. This pattern is often described as like a “Christmas tree.”
- Itching may or may not be present.
- The rash clears up on its own, but that may take a while, from a few weeks to a few months.

## What are some possible complications of pityriasis rosea?

- Usually, there are no complications.
- After the rash clears up, the skin may be slightly darker or lighter where the spots were. This goes away eventually, after several weeks or months.

## How is pityriasis rosea diagnosed and treated?

*Diagnosis and testing.* The doctor usually recognizes pityriasis rosea from the appearance of the rash. It can be confused with other skin conditions, such as eczema. The herald patch can sometimes be mistaken for ringworm (tinea corporis). In some cases, tests will be performed to exclude other possible causes.

*Treatment.* Usually, no treatment is needed. The rash goes away on its own. It may take a few weeks to a few months to clear up completely.

- Moisturizing lotion, or a weak steroid cream or ointment, may help relieve scaling and itching of the skin.

## When should I call your office?

Call our office if the rash of pityriasis rosea hasn't started to clear up within a few weeks or if it goes away but comes back.