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Pityriasis Rosea

What is Pityriasis Rosea?

Pityriasis rosea is a harmless rash that causes small, sometimes itchy spots on the belly, back, chest, arms, and legs. The rash usually lasts between 1-2 months, but can last even longer. The rash is felt to be caused by a virus, but as far as we know the rash is the only thing this virus causes. It is most common in older children and young adults.

What are the symptoms?

In many people, the rash starts with one round or oval patch called the “herald patch”. This spot is usually the size of a half dollar but might be larger. The herald patch is often on the back. A day or two later, many smaller spots about the size of dimes appear. Not everyone gets the herald patch before the rest of the rash.

If you have light skin, the spots are usually pink or salmon-colored. If you have darker skin, the spots can be a red-brown color or darker than your skin. The spots are often spread out in an “evergreen tree” pattern on the back and can be itchy or a little scaly.

Your provider will typically be able to tell you if you have Pityriasis rosea by learning about your symptoms and doing an exam.

How is it spread?

Pityriasis rosea does not appear to be contagious.

How is it treated?

Most of the time, no treatment is needed for Pityriasis rosea. If the rash is itchy, over-the-counter Sarna lotion may be applied and an oral antihistamine like Zyrtec may be taken.

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