

Viral Rash

Definition

- A pink rash that is all over the body
- The rash is part of a viral illness

Health Information

Symptoms

- Viral rashes usually have small pink spots.
- They occur on both sides of the body. Usually start on the chest, stomach and back.
- A fever can also be present.
- Other viral symptoms sometimes occur. Diarrhea is more common than cold symptoms. Sometimes, the child just is not acting right for a few days.

Causes

- Many viruses cause non-specific rashes. A common one is the Coxsackie virus.
- Viral rashes are more common with summer viruses.

Viral Rashes and Drug Rashes

- Prescription medicines sometimes cause widespread rashes.
- Non-prescription (OTC) medicines rarely cause any rashes.
- Most rashes that occur while taking an OTC medicine are viral rashes.
- Fever medicines (acetaminophen and ibuprofen) cause the most confusion. Reason: Most viral rashes start with a fever. Hence, the child is taking a fever medicine when the rash starts. But the fever medicine had nothing to do with the rash.

Prevention of Spread to Others

- Good hand washing can prevent spread of infection.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Most pink rashes all over are part of a viral illness.
- This is more likely if your child also has a fever. Other symptoms such as diarrhea or a cold point to a viral rash.
- These rashes are harmless and go away on their own.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. For Non-Itchy Viral Rashes:

- No treatment is needed or helpful.

3. For Itchy Viral Rashes:

- Most viral rashes are not itchy. If your child's rash is itchy, here are some tips.
- **Moisturizing Cream.** Use a moisturizing cream once or twice daily. Examples are Eucerin or Cetaphil creams. Apply the cream after a 5 or 10-minute bath. (Reason: Water-soaked skin feels less itchy). Avoid all soaps. (Reason: soaps, especially bubble bath, make the skin dry and itchy).
- **Steroid Cream.** For relief of severe itching, use 1% hydrocortisone cream on the most itchy areas. No prescription is needed. Do this 3 times per day.

4. **Other Symptoms:**
 - Treat any other viral symptoms (such as diarrhea) in the usual way.
5. **Fever:**
 - For fevers above 102° F (39° C), give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Note: Lower fevers are important for fighting infections.
 - For ALL fevers: Keep your child well hydrated. Give lots of cold fluids.
6. **What to Expect:**
 - Most viral rashes go away in 2-3 days.
7. **Return to School:**
 - If your child has a fever, avoid contact with other children. Also try to avoid contact with pregnant women.
 - Most viral rashes cannot be spread to others once the fever is gone.
 - For minor rashes, your child can return after the FEVER is gone.
 - For major rashes, your child can return after the RASH is gone. If your doctor has given medical clearance to return, can go back sooner.

Call Your Doctor If

- Fever lasts more than 3 days
- Rash lasts more than 4 days
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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