

Pityriasis Alba

Definition

- Small pale spots on the face
- Called Pityriasis Alba (PA)

Health Information

Symptoms

- Small spots with less pigment than the normal skin.
- The spots are flat. Most are oval shaped.
- Their borders are vague and fade into the normal skin.
- Pale spots are usually less than ½ inch (12 mm) across.
- The face is always involved, but can also occur on the arms.
- The spots may be covered with very fine scales.
- Spots look worse (more pale) in the summer when the normal skin gets tan.
- It rarely causes any itching.

Causes

- A partial loss of skin pigment caused by skin irritation
- The main irritants are soap and dry winter weather.
- Soap removes the skin's natural protective oils. Once they are gone, the skin can't hold moisture.
- Dry climates make it worse, as does winter weather. Reason: low humidity inside.
- Can occur as early as 2 years
- More common in children with eczema
- Seen in up to 30% of children

Prevention of Recurrent Pityriasis Alba

- Don't use soaps or bubble bath. Reason: It's made worse by soaps.
- You may want to limit use of swimming pools or hot tubs. Reason: Pool chemicals are very drying.
- Run a humidifier in the winter if the air is dry.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Pityriasis Alba (PA) is a common condition.
- It will get better if you avoid soaps and other irritants on the face.
- The normal pigment always returns, but it may take 6 months
- PA has nothing to do with vitiligo. Vitiligo are spots with complete loss of pigment.
- PA is harmless and can be treated at home.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. **Soap and Bathing:**

- Never use any soap on the areas with PA. This is very important.
- Young children with PA should avoid all soaps. Soaps take the natural protective oils out of the skin. Bubble bath does the most damage.
- For young children, the skin can be cleansed with warm water alone. Keep bathing to 10 minutes or less.
- Most young children only need to bathe twice a week.

3. **Moisturizing Cream:**

- Buy a large bottle of moisturizing cream. Avoid those with fragrances.
- Put the cream on the PA areas 2 times per day.
- After warm water baths or showers, trap the moisture in the skin. Do this by putting on the cream quickly. Use the cream within 3 minutes of completing the bath.
- During the winter, apply the cream to all the skin. Do this every day to prevent dry skin.

4. **Steroid Cream:**

- Usually PA is not itchy unless you scrub it with soap.
- For very itchy spots, use 1% hydrocortisone cream. No prescription is needed.
- Use up to 2 times per day as needed until the itching is better.
- In time, the moisturizing cream will be all that you need for treating PA.

5. **Prescription Creams:**

- There is no prescription cream that will help.

6. **Humidifier:**

- If your winters are dry, protect your child's skin from the constant drying effect.
- Do this by running a room humidifier full time.

7. **What to Expect:**

- With treatment, the skin should feel softer within 1 week
- The normal skin pigment will take up to 6 months to return. But, it always does.
- May recur in young children, but goes away by the teen years.

Call Your Doctor If

- After 2 weeks of treatment, dryness is not gone
- After 6 months, normal skin color has not returned
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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