

# Rash Widespread - Cause Unknown

## Definition

- A pink rash that is all over the body (widespread)
- Small or large pink spots
- Cause of the rash is unknown

## Health Information

### Causes

- Most non-specific rashes are caused by viruses. A common one is the Coxsackie virus.
- Viral rashes are more common with summer viruses.
- Some viruses can be diagnosed by the pattern of the rash. A good example is Hand-Foot-and-Mouth disease. It starts with red spots and tiny blisters on the palms and soles.
- Some viruses can be diagnosed by the pattern of the fever (Roseola). The rash starts 12 to 24 hours after the fever goes away. Most children get Roseola between 6 months and 3 years of age.
- Hives is likely if the rash is bumpy and itchy. Most cases of hives are also caused by a virus. Hives can also be an allergic reaction.
- Heat rash
- Insect bites
- Sunburn
- Widespread rashes with fever need to be seen, if they have not been diagnosed. Reason: There are some serious infections that can cause these rashes.

### Viral Rashes and Drug Rashes

- Prescription medicines sometimes cause widespread rashes. Some are allergic, but most are not.
- 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 needless worry. 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.
- Drug rashes can't be diagnosed over the phone.

### Prevention of Spread to Others

- Good hand washing can prevent spread of infection.

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Most rashes with small pink spots all over are part of a viral illness. A fever makes this more likely.
- Other symptoms such as diarrhea or a cold point to a viral rash.
- These viral rashes are harmless and go away on their own.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

### 2. For Non-Itchy Rashes:

- For viral rashes, no treatment is needed or helpful.
- If you suspect a heat rash, give a cool bath.

### 3. **For Itchy Rashes:**

- Most viral rashes are not itchy. If your child's rash is itchy, here are some tips.
- **Cool Bath.** For flare-ups of itching, give your child a cool bath. Do this for 10 minutes. Avoid all soaps. Reason: Soaps, especially bubble bath, make the skin dry and itchy. Option: Can add 2 ounces (60 ml) of baking soda per tub.
- **Moisturizing Cream.** Use a moisturizing cream once or twice daily. Examples are Eucerin or Cetaphil creams. Apply the cream after the bath. Reason: Water-soaked skin feels less 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.
- **Scratching.** Encourage your child not to scratch. Cut the fingernails short. Reason: Prevent a skin infection from bacteria.
- **Allergy Medicine for Itching.** If itching becomes severe, given an allergy medicine, such as Benadryl. No prescription is needed (Age limit: 1 year and older). If needed longer than a few days, switch to a long-acting antihistamine, such as Zyrtec. (Age limit: 2 years and older).

### 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

- Rash becomes purple or blood-colored
- Rash starts to look like hives
- Rash becomes very itchy
- 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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