

Itching Symptom - Localized

Definition

- Itching on one small area of skin.

Health Information

Symptoms

- Area feels itchy.
- It can also be dry, rough, red, or mildly swollen.

Causes

- **Irritants.** Many chemicals can irritate the skin. Common irritants are soaps, makeup, sunscreen, detergents, and insect repellent. Preservatives or fragrances in these products are often the culprits. Itching occurs only where they are applied.
- **Insect bites.** Very common cause of itching, often with redness and swelling. Most often a reaction to mosquito bites. For more information, see the Insect Bites handout.
- **Plants.** Touching certain plants can cause itching, often with a red rash. Most common are poison ivy, poison oak, ragweed, and stinging nettle. For more information, see the Poison Ivy, Oak, Sumac handout.
- **Animals.** Getting animal dander or animal saliva on the skin can cause itching.

Care Advice

1. Key Points

- Irritants, plants, or insect bites most often cause itchy areas of skin.
- Here is some home care advice that should help.

2. Clean the Itchy Area

- Wash the itchy area once with a mild soap to remove any irritants.
- After this, avoid using soap on the area.

3. Avoid Triggers

- Avoid skin products, soaps, animals, or plants you think trigger the itching.
- If you can't avoid the trigger, take an allergy medicine (antihistamine) before being around it.

4. Try Not to Scratch

- Encourage your child not to scratch.
- Cut fingernails short. Reason: to prevent small scratches that can lead to a skin infection.

5. Apply a Cold Compress

- Apply ice wrapped in a wet washcloth to the itchy area. If it helps, repeat as needed up to 3 times per day,
- Apply no longer than 20 minutes. Caution: avoid frostbite.

6. Steroid Cream

- You can apply 1% hydrocortisone to the most itchy areas. Apply twice a day as needed.
- This cream is over the counter (OTC). No prescription is needed.

7. Allergy Medicine

- If needed, give an allergy medicine by mouth to help with itching.
- Long-acting allergy medicines, such as cetirizine (Zyrtec), are most helpful. Follow package instructions for dosing. Do not give cetirizine to children younger than 6 months old.
- You may also try Benadryl. Follow package instructions for dosing. Do not give Benadryl to children younger than 1 year old.
- These medicines are over the counter (OTC). No prescription is needed.

8. What To Expect

- Itching should go away within a few days.
- Itching may come back if you have contact with the trigger again.

Call Your Doctor If

- Itching lasts more than 7 days
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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