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PITYRIASIS ROSEA

What is Pityriasis Rosea (PR)?

Pityriasis Rosea (PR) is a harmless disorder of the skin that can occur at any age but is most common in young adults. The rash can last from several weeks to a few months and it disappears without treatment. The rash does not cause scars, but people with darker skin color may develop brownish spots that eventually fade.

What does PR look like and feel like?

PR usually begins with a single pink "herald" patch that is 1 to 3 inches across. Within 1 to 2 weeks after the herald patch first appears, a few to many smaller patches develop on the body and on the arms and legs. The patches are round or oval and often form a pattern over the back that resembles the outline of an evergreen tree. The patches are covered with fine scales.

About half the people with PR will have some itching.

What causes PR?

The cause is unknown, but there is some evidence to suggest that a virus causes this rash. PR does not seem to be contagious.

What is the treatment?

In general, treatment is not necessary because the rash disappears by itself.

- **If the skin is dry**, a moisturizing lotion such as Lubriderm may be helpful.
- **If the skin is itchy**, use 1% hydrocortisone cream (no prescription necessary) 2 or 3 times a day. Also, lukewarm water should be used for baths or showers because hot water can aggravate the itching.

CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF:

- The rash becomes very itchy.
- The rash lasts longer than 3 months.

(revised 05/20/03)