

Rash - Widespread

Definition

- Rash over large areas or most of the body (widespread or generalized)
- Occasionally just on hands, feet and buttocks - but both sides of body
- Red or pink rash
- Small spots, large spots or solid red skin

Causes

- Main cause: a 2 or 3 day rash occurring with a viral illness. Viral rashes usually have symmetrical pink spots on the trunk.
- Other common causes: 5 rashes that you may be able to recognize are listed above in "Related Symptoms." If you suspect one of them, go to that topic. If not, use this topic.

Return to School

- Most viral rashes are no longer [contagious](#) once the fever is gone.
- For minor rashes, your child can return to child care or school after the FEVER is gone.
- For major rashes, your child can return to child care or school after the RASH is gone or your doctor says it's safe to return with the rash.

Care Advice

1. For Non-Itchy Rashes: No treatment is necessary, except for heat rashes which respond to cool baths.
2. For Itchy Rashes:
 - a. Wash the skin once with soap to remove irritants.
 - b. Then give your child cool baths without any soap 4 times per day for 10 minutes whenever the itch is uncomfortable (caution: avoid any chill).
 - c. Follow with calamine lotion or a baking soda solution (1 teaspoon in 4 ounces of water) or (5 ml in 120 ml of water)
3. Fever Medicine: For fever above 102°F (39°C), give acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) or ibuprofen.
4. Contagiousness:



- a. If your child has a fever, avoid contact with other children and especially pregnant women until a diagnosis is made.
 - b. Most viral rashes are contagious (especially if a fever is present).
 - c. Your child can return to child care or school after the rash is gone or your doctor says it's safe to return with the rash.
5. Expected Course: Most viral rashes disappear within 48 hours.

When To Call

Call 911 Now (your child may need an ambulance) If

- Purple or blood-colored rash with fever
- Sudden onset of rash (within 2 hours) and also has difficulty with breathing or swallowing
- Not moving or too weak to stand

Call Your Doctor Now (night or day) If

- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Purple or blood-colored rash WITHOUT fever
- Bright red skin that peels off in sheets
- Large blisters on skin
- Bloody crusts on lips
- Taking a prescription medication within the last 3 days
- Fever
- Menstruating and using tampons

Call Your Doctor Within 24 Hours (between 8 am and 4 pm) If

- Widespread rash, but none of the symptoms described above (Reason: needs a diagnosis)

Adapted from The American Academy of Pediatrics (2011) at www.healthychildren.org

