

# Pityriasis rosea (Gibert's disease)

## What is pityriasis rosea?

Pityriasis rosea is a type of skin rash that usually affects young people, especially between the ages of 10 and 35. It appears on the trunk, the nape of the neck and often also on the upper arms and thighs, with small oval slightly scaly reddish bumps. The bumps continue to appear for a few weeks and spread over the back in the shape of a Christmas tree.

It normally goes away without treatment after about 6-8 weeks.

An outbreak is usually heralded by a single, slightly bigger, round or oval patch, a few centimetres in size, which becomes ring-shaped, with scaly edges: this is known as the *herald patch*.

It does not usually cause itchiness, but it may do so, especially in patients with atopic or dry skin.

## What do we know about pityriasis?

We don't know what causes it, but we do know that it is a benign rash and that it is not contagious.

The fact that outbreaks appear in spring and autumn, and that it does not usually affect the same person twice, seems to indicate that it may be connected with a viral infection, perhaps with the herpes 6 and 7 viruses. However, it is not contagious and is not considered to be a skin infection.

## Which treatment should you follow if you have pityriasis rosea?

There is no specific treatment. It is important to have a correct diagnosis.

If the rash causes itchiness, your doctor may prescribe an oral antihistamine or you can apply a low-dose steroid cream to the lesions, in small amounts, for just a few days.

Moderate exposure to direct sunlight can be beneficial and speed up resolution but you should always be careful not to get burnt, use sunscreens and avoid sunbathing at the hottest time of the day.

You can also follow these **general guidelines to stop your skin from itching:**

- Avoid long baths and very hot showers.
- Keep your skin moisturised.
- Wear cotton clothing.

