

What's that rash?

Red, itchy skin — you have a rash. Most people get a rash at some point in their lives. Rashes happen when the skin reacts to a foreign “invader.” They also occur with illnesses, like chicken pox or measles.



Poison ivy, bug bites, and allergies are all possible causes for a rash. A minor rash is usually not a sign of a serious health problem. It may be a sign that your skin is reacting to an invader.



IF YOU NOTICE A RASH, ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:

1. Have I been outside recently? In the woods? You could have run into poison ivy or been bitten by an insect.
2. Do I have allergies? Sometimes seasonal allergies to pollen and mold can cause itchy skin.
3. Did I use a new laundry product? Certain laundry detergents and fabric softeners can cause rashes and allergic reactions in some people.
4. Did I use a new skin care product? Fragrances and other ingredients in these products can be irritating to skin.
5. Have I taken a new medicine? Some medicines can cause rashes and allergic reactions. Call your doctor right away if you notice this.
6. Am I wearing new jewelry? Some people are allergic to certain metals, like nickel. This can cause itching and redness.



TREATING THE RASH

If your rash is minor and you otherwise feel fine, you can probably treat it at home.

Over-the-counter creams can be helpful. You can also try an ice pack or aloe gel to soothe irritated skin.



WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

A rash can be a sign you need medical care. Watch for these red flags:

- Fever
- Feeling unwell
- A rash keeps getting worse
- A rash covers a large area of the body
- Severe pain
- Any rash on the face
- A rash that is very red, oozing, or hot
- A circular rash with a “bull’s eye” in the middle
- A rash that might be caused by your medicine
- Signs of a severe allergy, such as swelling or trouble breathing
- A rash appears after being around someone who has a serious illness, like measles or chicken pox
- A rash lasts more than 2 weeks

If you're concerned about a rash on yourself or your child, always call your doctor.