

Rashes

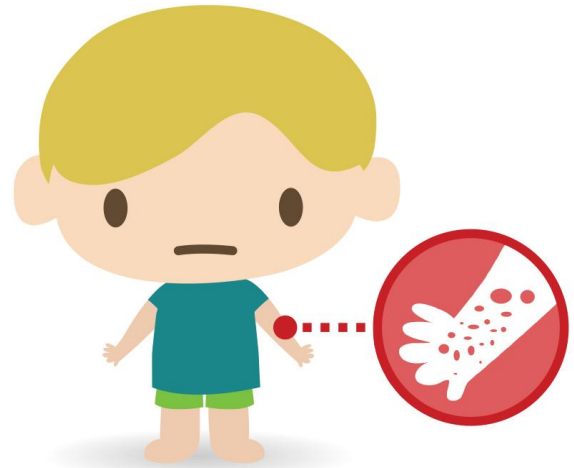
What is it?

- Skin rashes are very common in children and can be caused by many things including: infections, allergies and drug reactions
- Most often in children, rashes are due to minor infections (typically viruses) and look more dramatic than they are serious
- There are thousands of viruses that can cause symptoms of an infection (such as runny nose, cough, diarrhea, fever) as well as a rash but it can often be impossible to know which virus your child may have

Common Childhood Rashes

Hand Foot and Mouth Disease (Coxsackie Virus)

- Viral illness that usually affects pre-school aged children
- Symptoms start with a fever and then the rash appears
- The rash looks like small blisters that can be around the mouth, on the palms and back of hands, on the top and soles of feet and in the diaper area (groin and buttocks)
- The blisters can be slightly painful but are usually not itchy
- Some children get blisters in the back of their throat making it painful to drink and eat



Seek Immediate Medical Attention if:

- Your child looks unwell with a new or worsening rash (very sleepy, lethargic or irritable)
- Your child has any trouble breathing, vomiting or diarrhea or feeling dizzy with a rash, especially if this happens after eating a new food or medicine
- Your child has a rash with a fever for more than 5 days
- Your child has a painful and swollen rash
- Your child has a rash with painful blisters or peeling skin
- Your child has a rash that looks like small bruises

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- No special treatment or antibiotics is needed. Offer your child fluids throughout the day and keep your child comfortable with Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen
- Your child is no longer contagious when their rash has crusted over and no more new blisters are appearing

Roseola

- Common viral illness that affects children 12 to 24 months old
- Children usually have a high fever for 3 to 4 days without cough or runny nose
- Within 24 hours of the fever breaking, your child may develop a full body red rash. The rash is not painful or very itchy
- The rash goes away after 3 to 5 days
- Your child is no longer contagious once their fever goes away

Slapped Cheek / Fifth's Disease

- Common viral illness that can affect children of any age
- Children start with cough and cold symptoms and may have a fever
- When these symptoms get better, your child will develop red rash across their cheeks and nose – it looks like they have been slapped in the cheeks
- Children can also have a lacey-pattern rash on their chest, stomach and arms/legs. The rash is uncomfortable but not usually itchy
- Older children and teenagers may complain of swollen and stiff joints
- The rash goes away in 1 to 3 days and your child is no longer contagious once the rash appears

Hives

- Common rash that can be caused by viral infections or a mild allergic reaction. It can affect children of any age
- The rash looks like bright red, raised splotches on the skin. The rash is quite itchy and can move around the entire body
- Children are otherwise well – they might have a mild cough or runny nose but should not have any trouble breathing
- Children can be given Benadryl® to help make them less itchy
- Hives can come and go for up to a week

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Eczema

- Eczema is a common, chronic skin condition where children get dry, scaly skin that can be very itchy and uncomfortable
- Eczema is not caused by a viral illness or infection. It usually affects children under 5 years old
- Eczema can 'flare up' where areas of skin get very red, itchy and tender.
- Eczema is not a life-threatening rash and can take time to get under control. Children with this type of rash should be seen and followed by their family doctor

Key Points

- Skin rashes are very common in children and are rarely dangerous or harmful
- Most rashes are caused by viral infections, and sometimes from an allergic reaction or drug reaction
- Rashes can look very dramatic but don't usually bother your child. Most rashes get better in 5 to 7 days and do not require any special medication

Symptoms

Rashes can appear quite suddenly and look very dramatic. Skin can be:

- Red and hot
- Slightly tender to the touch
- Itchy

Some children may also have a little swelling to their hands, feet and around their eyes. Although children may be uncomfortable with the rash, they don't appear sick or have any trouble breathing.

Treatment

- Most rashes will go away on their own in one week and do not require any special treatment or medicines
- If your child is very itchy and uncomfortable, you can give them anti-histamine medication like Benadryl®. These medicines help to make their skin feel less itchy and irritated, and can also make your child sleepy. Use Benadryl® as directed on the packaging or advised by a health care professional
- Avoid any scented creams or soaps

Know Your Options

It can be scary when your child is sick. But in most cases, you don't need to go to the emergency department. If you're unsure, [we're here to help.](#)



Please Note

The content provided on these pages is not intended to replace medical advice. If you have concerns about the health of your child, contact your health care provider directly. If your child has an emergency, go to the nearest emergency department or call 911. Alberta Health Services and Project HEAL strive to ensure that all material is correct but will not be held liable for errors or incomplete information contained in these pages.