

Itchy skin

Itchy skin is not usually a sign of anything serious. You can often treat it yourself and it will usually go away after a few weeks.

Itchy skin is common:

- during [pregnancy](#)
- after the [menopause](#)

This is caused by hormonal changes and usually gets better over time.

In rare cases, itchy skin can be a sign of a more serious condition, such as thyroid, liver or kidney problems.

Treating itchy skin yourself

Sometimes itching is caused by dry, cracked or irritated skin.

There are things you can do to ease the itching, stop it returning and avoid skin damage from scratching.

Do

- ✓ pat or tap your skin instead of scratching it
- ✓ hold something cool on your skin, like a damp towel
- ✓ regularly use a moisturiser or emollient with no perfume
- ✓ use a special shampoo if your scalp is itchy - such as an [anti-dandruff shampoo](#)
- ✓ keep your nails clean, short and smooth
- ✓ wear loose cotton clothing
- ✓ use a laundry liquid or powder that's for sensitive skin

Don't

- ✗ do not have very hot baths or showers
- ✗ do not wear tight clothes, or clothes made from wool or synthetic fabrics
- ✗ do not spend a long time in the bath or shower
- ✗ do not use perfumed soaps, deodorants or moisturisers

A pharmacist can help with itchy skin

A pharmacist can tell you what the best products are for itchy skin. For example, you can use creams, lotions or medicines called [antihistamines](#).

Tell them where your skin is itchy and if you have any other symptoms.

A pharmacist might also be able to tell you:

- what you can do to treat it yourself

if you need to see a GP

Contact your GP if your itchy skin:

- does not get better with self-care or it keeps coming back
- is caused by a new rash, lump or swelling that you're worried about
- is all over your body - this could be a sign of something more serious

Treatment from a GP

A GP might prescribe creams, lotions or tablets, depending on what's causing the itching.

They will look at your skin and ask about your symptoms.

To help find the cause of your itchy skin your GP might:

- arrange a [blood test](#)
- wipe a cotton bud over the area of itchy skin (a swab)
- gently scrape off some skin cells so they can be tested

A GP may also refer you to see a doctor who specialises in skin problems (dermatologist).

Causes of itchy skin

Itchy skin has many possible causes.

These include:

- fungal skin infections, such as thrush, [ringworm](#) or [athlete's foot](#)
- [allergies](#)
- [hives](#) or prickly heat
- insects living on the skin such as [scabies](#), [head lice](#) and pubic lice
- skin conditions such as [eczema](#) or [dandruff](#)

Do not try to diagnose yourself. Talk to your GP if you're worried.

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