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Chiggers

Chiggers are tiny, 6-legged wingless organisms (larvae) that mature to become a type of mite. Chiggers are found in tall grass and weeds. Their bite causes severe itching.

Causes

Chiggers are found in certain outdoor areas, such as:

- Berry patches
- Tall grass and weeds
- Edges of woodlands

Chiggers bite humans around the waist, ankles, or in warm skin folds. Bites commonly occur in the summer and fall months.

Symptoms

The main symptoms of chigger bites are:

- Severe itching
- Red pimple-like bumps or hives

Itching usually occurs several hours after the chiggers attach to the skin. The bite is painless.

A skin rash may appear on the parts of the body that were exposed to the sun. It may stop where the underwear meets the legs. This is often a clue that the rash is due to chigger bites.

Exams and Tests

Your health care provider can usually diagnose chiggers by examining the rash. You'll likely be asked about your outdoor activity. A special magnifying scope may be used to find the chiggers on the skin. This helps confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment

The goal of treatment is to stop the itching. Antihistamines and corticosteroid creams or lotions may be helpful. Antibiotics are not necessary unless you develop a skin infection.

Possible Complications

A secondary infection may occur from scratching.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your provider if the rash itches very badly, or if your symptoms get worse or do not improve with treatment.

Prevention

Avoid outdoor areas that you know are contaminated with chiggers. Applying bug spray containing DEET to skin and clothing can help prevent chigger bites.

Alternative Names

Harvest mite; Red mite

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