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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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