

Let's Talk About...

Papular Urticaria

What is papular urticaria?

Papular [PAP-yoo-ler] urticaria [ur-ti-KAIR-ee-uh] is a condition that causes long-lasting bumps to appear on the skin.

What causes it?

Papular urticaria is caused by an increased sensitivity to bug bites (almost like an allergic reaction). The most common types of bugs that cause the condition include fleas, bed bugs, biting midges, and mosquitoes. However, any biting insect can cause it.

This skin condition most often occurs in the spring and summer months when insects are more active. However, the timing depends on the climate and types of bugs where you live.

What are the symptoms?

The signs and symptoms of this skin condition can include:

- **Red, itchy bumps.** Sometimes one new insect bite can cause many red, itchy bumps to appear all over the body. The bumps are most commonly seen on exposed areas of the skin but can occur anywhere on the body.
- **Fluid-filled blisters.**
- **Old bumps becoming itchy again.**
- **Dark spots.** This occurs most often in darker-skinned children after the bumps go away.
- **Scarring.** In some children, scratching the itchy bumps can lead to scars.
- **Delayed reaction.** As a child gets older, the skin's reaction to insect bites can be delayed. It may be difficult to know when the child was bitten.



How long do symptoms last?

A child with this condition can have skin bumps that last from several days to several weeks or even a few months. It's possible for new patches of bumps to appear for several months or even years. This depends on how long it takes for a child to outgrow this skin reaction. For some children, itchy bumps may occur at about the same time each year for a few years. Most commonly, once a child outgrows the condition, the skin reaction stops happening. At this point, even if children get bitten again, they usually don't develop new bumps.

How is it diagnosed?

Your child's doctor can diagnose this skin condition by getting a health history and doing a skin exam. Sometimes certain tests are needed to rule out other causes of the rash.

How is papular urticaria treated?

The best way to treat this skin condition is to keep bug bites from happening in the first place. However, once the bumps occur, they can be treated.

Preventing bug bites

- **Wear protective clothing when outdoors.** This can include long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks, and closed-toed shoes.
- **Apply an insect repellent before going outdoors.** Most experts suggest one that contains DEET, picaridin [pi-KAIR-i-din], or oil of eucalyptus [yoo-kuh-LIP-tus]. **Note:** Permethrin [per-METH-rin] products may be used on clothing and gear, but **never directly on the skin.**
- **Check your home, bedding, and pets for bugs.** Consider calling an exterminator if you find bugs in your home. Take your pet to the veterinarian if they have fleas.

Treating existing bites

- **Your child's doctor may prescribe a steroid cream to put on the raised, red, itchy bumps.** This will help treat itching and make the bumps go away faster.
- **Your child's doctor may recommend oral antihistamines** [an-ti-HIS-tuh-meens]. These medications are taken by mouth and help limit an allergic reaction.
- **Apply an unscented moisturizer,** like petroleum jelly, to your child's skin. Do this once or twice each day, especially after a bath.
- **Use sunscreen.** Old bumps can turn into flat, dark spots and remain for several months. Applying sunscreen to your child's skin before they go out in the sun can help the spots go away faster.
- **Clip your child's nails short and tell them to try to avoid scratching.** This will help prevent scars and infections.

Questions for my doctor

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