

# Patient Information for Erythema multiforme

## Overview

Erythema multiforme is an inflammatory skin reaction that occurs in response to medication, infection, or illness. There are two types of erythema multiforme: erythema multiforme minor and erythema multiforme major. Erythema multiforme major has systemic symptoms such as fever and joint pain.

## Who's At Risk

Erythema multiforme often occurs as a drug reaction in response to barbiturates, penicillins, phenytoin, and sulfonamides. It can also develop after contracting herpes simplex virus or a mycoplasma infection.

## Signs & Symptoms

Symptoms of erythema multiforme include:

- Fever
- Itchy skin
- Joint aches
- Sore, abnormal skin lesions

## Self-Care Guidelines

Measures can be taken to manage symptoms:

- Use moist compresses on the skin
- Take pain medication such as ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Keep clean and maintain distance from others to prevent secondary infections

## When to Seek Medical Care

Seek medical care if you suspect you may have erythema multiforme or if symptoms get worse.

## Treatments Your Physician May Prescribe

Your health care provider may tell you to stop taking any medication that could be causing erythema multiforme.

For mild symptoms, the following treatments may be given:

- Antihistamines to stop itching
- Oral antiviral medicine if herpes simplex is causing the problem
- Pain medication
- Topical anesthetics to reduce pain, especially if reaction is in your mouth

For more severe symptoms, your health care provider may prescribe:

- Antibiotics for skin infections
- Corticosteroids to reduce inflammation