

Patient Information for Polymorphous light eruption

Overview

Polymorphous light eruption is a reaction seen on the skin of people sensitive to sun exposure. This rash most often consists of multiple pink or red bumps or raised patches, but there may also be blisters or splotches. The rash is often itchy.

The reaction develops within minutes to hours after being in the sun. The first exposure to sunlight after winter usually causes the worst rash of the year, and the rash may occur every year at this time.

Most lesions will go away within several days and will not leave a scar.

Who's At Risk

Polymorphous light eruption is most common in fair-skinned women in their 20s, but it can affect all sexes, ages, and ethnicities.

People sensitive to sunlight may develop this rash when they are first exposed to the sun after the winter, such as visitors to tropical locations.

Signs & Symptoms

This skin rash can look like pinkish-red bumps, blisters, or splotches.

Self-Care Guidelines

Prevention is key. Avoid spending time in the sun, especially in the middle of the day. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen and wear protective clothing when outdoors in the sun.

An over-the-counter anti-itch cream with hydrocortisone may help calm the rash. Cold compresses and cool baths may also relieve itching.

When to Seek Medical Care

Most people do not seek medical care for polymorphous light eruption. If the reaction is severe and does not go away after several days, consult your medical provider.

Treatments Your Physician May Prescribe

Your physician or dermatologist may prescribe topical corticosteroid cream.

Antihistamines such as Benadryl may reduce itching.

If the reaction is severe, corticosteroid pills (like Prednisone) may be prescribed.