

Skin Rash

Synopsis

Skin rashes are among the most common skin complaints patients will take to their dermatologist. Rashes, from dry skin rashes, to swollen and red rashes, or itchy skin rashes, may stem from a whole range of causes but are not typically a diagnosis in and of themselves. Because rashes are such a common symptom of other issues, make sure to take note of the particulars of your skin rash before you talk to your Manhattan dermatologist. Include notes on color, location, texture changes, temperature of the rash when touched, how large it is, whether there is swelling, whether there is itching present and if you've come into contact with any irritants or allergens in the last day or two. This will help your doctor narrow down what kind of skin rash you have, its cause and enable him to quickly relieve your discomfort, in most cases.

Skin Rashes Defined

A rash is a change to your skin, most commonly with a change in color, texture and/or sensation anywhere on your body. Not all rashes are red, some are just a change in your skin texture, such as scaliness. Others are bright and painful-looking, but do not itch at all. As your New York doctor goes over your symptoms, he will be able to decide what is causing your skin rash. Be aware that sometimes, there is no apparent cause. In those instances, rashes may go away on their own after a time, or they may be recurring with little to be done to resolve them.

Symptoms

The symptoms of a particular rash will be based upon what caused your rash in the first place. The various triggers for skin rashes include genetics, other medical problems, medications or physically coming into contact with an irritant. Genetically speaking, there are a number of rashes that are traceable through families with the most common one being contact dermatitis, or eczema. Another skin rash that may be caused by genetics has to do with what you may be allergic to, as with food or medication allergies. It is not unusual for these types of allergies to run in families, and may result in a rash when consumed or handled.

The word "rash" covers a wide range of skin appearances. You may notice swelling, or even blisters. Your skin rash may start out a dry skin rash but morph into an itchy skin rash as it runs its course. There is no time limit on skin rashes either: sometimes they appear abruptly, as in the case of an allergic reaction, while other times they evolve over days or even weeks. Your rash may consist of a collection of little red bumps, or even change textures and colors as time wears on, especially if you leave your skin rash untreated. Some resolve on their own, but others need some medical intervention.

Causes

If you have other diagnoses, you may find that one of those illnesses is causing your skin rash. This is referred to as a "secondary symptom." Another possibility is any medication you may have taken in the last seven to ten days. Often, these drug-related rashes are painless, non-itchy rashes that are flat, red and blotchy. These kinds of rashes still indicate that your body is reacting to the medication, regardless of its lack of itchiness or discomfort. You should contact your Manhattan dermatologist immediately.

You may get a rash from external irritants, that is, something you have touched in any way or consumed, sometimes even something you have just brushed up against. Some things are naturally irritating to the skin and will leave you with a non-itchy, dry skin rash. The severity of the response depends on your skin's sensitivity. If, however, you are actually allergic to the external irritant, your skin can react more severely, including a rapidly appearing rash, or even blisters.

The list of possible irritants is long and can include:

- Everyday items such as scented soap on your skin or the detergent you used on your clothes.
- Certain plants, such as poison ivy or poison oak, can cause rashes that are painful and itchy, but doubly so if you are allergic to them.
- If an allergy is severe enough, you can get a contact dermatitis rash just by handling a food you are allergic to, even if you have not consumed it.
- Harsh chemicals, such as bleach, can easily be the culprit of a skin rash if it has come into contact with your bare skin.
- Another common cause of rashes is heat, whether from leaning against something warm, using a hot tub, or from being outside in excessive heat for too long, your skin will react with a blotchy redness that is sometimes tender and painful.
- Your own skin can actually be a culprit, when there is skin-on-skin contact and friction, where perspiration can become trapped, a bright red and painful rash can break out.

Diagnosis

Note that there is such a large range of rashes, coupled with a long list of possible causes, that your dermatologist will not be able to diagnosis a rash described over the phone. An in-person appointment will be necessary for proper diagnosis and treatment. That being said, a good Manhattan dermatologist can usually narrow down the rash category upon sight.

Treatments

Treatments will normally fall into one of the following categories: cream or ointment placed directly on the rash, a change in any medications which may have caused it, a tracing of the rash to another diagnosis which is the actual problem, oral antihistamines, or baths. Some rashes may require several treatments before they begin to settle down; others will not recede until the root cause has been taken care of. Either way, rashes should always be seen by a doctor.