

Pityriasis Alba

What is pityriasis alba?

Pityriasis alba is a benign and very common, self-resolving, eczematous (mild dermatitis) rash that most commonly affects children and young adults. It is more noticeable in people with skin of colour (pigmented skin).

What causes pityriasis alba?

The cause of pityriasis alba is unknown. Pityriasis alba is not caused by a fungus and is not contagious.

What does pityriasis alba look like?

Pityriasis alba looks like multiple, discrete, poorly outlined hypopigmented (whitish) or pinkish spots and patches. The spots are usually dry, with or without the presence of scale. These patches are seen most commonly on the face, neck and upper limbs.

Pityriasis alba may be itchy but more commonly there are no symptoms associated with the condition.

The condition tends to be more common in dry winter months, however the patches may be more noticeable in summer when the surrounding skin is tanned and the colour difference between the whitish patches and the tanned skin is more obvious.

What other problems can occur with pityriasis alba?

This condition may be associated with atopic (allergic) conditions such as eczema, asthma or hayfever.

How is pityriasis alba diagnosed?

No formal tests are required to make the diagnosis. It is diagnosed by clinical examination of the skin (looking at the skin).

How is pityriasis alba treated?

Treatment for pityriasis alba is not usually necessary. Moisturising creams may help with skin dryness and the general appearance of the condition. A mild steroid cream or non-steroid cream such as pimecrolimus may be prescribed for a short time if mild inflammation is present.

What is the prognosis/likely outcome of pityriasis alba?

The pigment changes (white areas) in the skin usually take several months to recover. Pityriasis alba resolves spontaneously and may take several months or years to recover. This condition does not cause any long-term complications or scarring.