



MID-JERSEY PEDIATRICS

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SEA LICE (SEABATHER'S ERUPTION)

Seabather's eruption is an intensely itchy skin rash that occurs primarily in areas covered by swimwear. Most cases occur between March and August. The rash is a reaction to a salt water parasite that penetrates the skin.

Clinical Manifestations

A red bumpy rash occurs predominantly in areas covered by swimwear especially in the waist, buttocks, and female breast area. Under the arms rashes occur in 71%. A pricking or itching sensation may be noted at the time of exposure to the parasite. This itching, which may last for periods of 5 minutes, to 1 hour, is generally associated with small red spots at each penetration site. This initial reaction may persist or disappear after a few hours, to be followed 10-15 hours later, by a more **severe**, intensely itchy rash with small bumps surrounded by a zone of redness. In most cases, this rash reaches its peak in 3-4 days, resolves within a week, and leaves a residual brown pigmentation which may persist for several months. On rare occasion, symptoms may include nausea, headache, fever, and/or muscle aches. The rash is not contagious.

Prevention

1. Avoid wearing T-shirts while in the ocean, but use a sunscreen.
2. Listen to local beach reports and observe posted beach messages warning against sea-lice.
3. After ocean exposure, swimmers should change out of their bathing suits as soon as possible after swimming.
4. Bathing suits should be thoroughly machine washed with detergent and then heat dried. Some bathers have experienced a reoccurrence of symptoms when wearing suits that had only been air dried.

Treatment

1. Administration of an oral antihistamine (Bendaryl).
2. Application of a 1% hydrocortisone cream.
3. Bathing in a colloidal oatmeal preparation (Aveeno) can provide relief from itching.
4. In severe cases, an oral corticosteroid may be needed.