

ERYTHEMA ANNULARE CENTRIFUGUM

Erythema Annulare Centrifugum (EAC) is an uncommon skin reaction consisting of red lesions of the skin in a circular or C- shaped pattern. The words that make up the name describe the typical lesions: erythema meaning redness of the skin, annulare meaning ring-shaped and centrifugum meaning developing outward from the center. The lesions may or may not have some scaling of the skin on the inner border of the circle. EAC often has no associated symptoms, but may be accompanied by some itching. It is a condition that can affect people of all ages and occurs equally in men and women.

EAC usually starts out as a solid red bump that grows outward along the skin a few millimeters per day. As the lesion grows, the center clears, losing its red color and leading to the characteristic circular shape. Patients with EAC usually have multiple lesions. These lesions may disappear after a variable period of time, but may be replaced by new ones. EAC often has a chronic and recurrent course.

A large number of lymphocytes (a type of white blood cell) and some other immune system cells are found in the skin, often surrounding the blood vessels, in EAC. We may want to do a biopsy of your skin to confirm the diagnosis of EAC. We do not know what causes EAC. It is thought to be a hypersensitivity reaction that could be caused by many different agents. EAC has been found to be associated with infections, malignancies, drugs and other diseases in a few patients, but there has been no real evidence that these factors cause EAC. EAC has not been associated consistently with any systemic disease. In most cases no underlying cause can be found.

Treatment of a disease for which you are unsure of the cause, like EAC, can be difficult. Topical or oral anti-itch medications can be helpful in a patient whose EAC itches. We may also suggest a topical steroid cream, oral steroids or an injection of steroids. Steroid treatment may help the current lesions to go away, but when the therapy is discontinued new lesions often form. After a variable period of time, the lesions of EAC may go away on their own, but there is always a chance of recurrence.

