

PITYRIASIS RUBRA PILARIS (PRP)

Pityriasis rubra pilaris (PRP) is a long and fancy name given to an uncommon skin disease. This skin problem is characterized by scaling (pityriasis), redness (rubra), and the involvement of the hair follicles (pilaris). PRP usually develops fairly suddenly in adults but can occur in any age group. The cause of PRP is unknown. PRP is not an infection. It is not contagious. It does not involve internal organs. It is not psoriasis but it is similar to psoriasis since both problems can produce red and scaling areas.

PRP often begins as a flaky, patchy, red area on the scalp, face, or hands. Over several weeks or months the rash may increase and move to other areas of the body. The hands and feet can be quite thickened and yellow. The nails may become discolored and brittle. The skin often has a rough, dry feel and the small bumps are often related to the hair follicle involvement.

It is difficult to predict the course of PRP in an individual patient. The skin problem can take months or years to improve although it normally does disappear completely in the vast majority of patients. Fortunately there is effective treatment.

In some cases PRP is relatively localized and topical therapy by itself is often very helpful. There are various topical treatments, one of the most common being topical Taclonex. When PRP involves larger body surface areas, topical therapy is not effective. For this reason various oral medications are used. The two most common treatments for this condition are acitretin (Soriatane) and/or methotrexate.

PRP is a condition that all dermatologists understand and if you would travel anywhere in the world and tell a dermatologist you have PRP, he or she will recognize what the condition is. Unfortunately, no one knows the true cause. Fortunately there is effective treatment and I will determine what is the best treatment in your individual case.

If you have any other questions regarding your condition, please don't hesitate to ask me before you leave the office.