



ERYTHASMA

What is it?

Erythrasma is a common skin condition that affects the following areas – the groin, under the arms and between the toes

What does it look like?

Erythrasma appears as well-defined scaly red, pink or brown patches. The most commonly affected areas are the groin, armpits, between the toes and in other skin folds. It can sometimes become generalized and affect larger areas on the body. The patches can sometimes be itchy or have an odor.

What causes it?

Erythrasma is an infection of the skin caused by an overgrowth of a bacterium called *Corynebacterium minutissimum*. It can affect healthy adults, but it more frequently affects older people with obesity, excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis [\[link\]](#)), diabetes mellitus or people who live in tropical climates. Infection is facilitated under conditions of moisture and occlusion.

How is it diagnosed?

Erythrasma is diagnosed based on the history and physical appearance of the lesions. A special lamp called a Wood's lamp can be used to help confirm the diagnosis, as erythrasma glows bright pink under the lamp.

How is it treated?

Erythrasma can be treated with either topical (applied directly to the skin) or oral therapies. For patients with localised disease, a topical antibiotic such as clindamycin or erythromycin can be used. On the hand, it can be difficult to treat extensive areas with creams and so oral antibiotics (clindamycin or erythromycin) may be preferred. It is important to note that recurrence is common.

What can be done to prevent it?

In order to avoid recurrences, it is important to keep the skin as dry as possible and optimise pre-disposing conditions such as keeping diabetes well-controlled.

This information has been written by Dr Jose W Ricardo and Dr Deshan Sebaratnam