



THE AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE
OF DERMATOLOGISTS

Discoid Eczema

Also known as ... Discoid Dermatitis

What is Discoid Eczema?

Discoid eczema is a common type of eczema or dermatitis with coin-shaped areas of inflammation on the limbs or torso. It is usually very itchy.

What causes Discoid Eczema?

The cause of discoid eczema is unknown. Some people have conditions related to eczema such as hay fever or asthma. Dry skin may aggravate or predispose a person to developing discoid eczema and the rash may be worse in winter. Less commonly, certain medications, or contact with a chemical in the person's environment, may play a role.

What does Discoid Eczema look like?

Discoid eczema occurs in both adults and children. Initially, the coin-shaped areas may be pink and relatively flat with some scaling but other changes may occur such as thickening of the skin, oozing, crusting and severe itch. As the rash improves, some brownish or pale discolouration may occur which gradually disappears over months.

In some cases, the rash may become more widespread. Secondary infection may occur with significant oozing of fluid and crusting.

Discoid eczema may recur or become chronic. It responds to treatment more slowly than other types of eczema.

How is Discoid Eczema diagnosed?

A dermatologist usually makes a diagnosis of discoid eczema, based on the person's medical history and by examining the skin.

If there is doubt about the diagnosis or it does not have a classical appearance, a skin biopsy may be needed.

A swab may be needed to determine if a bacterial or viral infection is also present.

Patch testing for dermatitis may be needed if a person's history suggests that they are in contact with a material that may be causing the condition.

There are no routine blood tests.

How is Discoid Eczema treated?

General measures include:

- Wearing cotton clothing
- Avoiding overheating
- Avoiding irritating products
- Using soap substitutes such as sorbolene and glycerine or other products your dermatologist may recommend
- Using moisturisers (such as sorbolene and glycerine or other products your dermatologist may recommend) at least after bathing and ideally twice daily

Specific treatments include:

- Oral antibiotics, may be prescribed if infection is present
- Topical steroid (anti-inflammatory) ointments or creams may be prescribed by your dermatologist
- Antihistamines may be helpful for some people

If discoid eczema becomes more chronic, or does not respond well to these measures, your dermatologist will discuss other treatment options with you.

This information has been written by Dr Sara Tritton