

## **ERYTHEMA MULTIFORME**

Erythema multiforme is the medical name for a skin condition which abruptly appears on the skin. It usually starts on the back of hands and/or tops of feet and may spread along the limbs towards the trunk. It may be relatively limited in the amount of involvement but at times it can be extensive. The initial lesions are round red bumps which progress to a target-like appearance. There may be an associated itch or burning sensation. Rarely, your mouth, eyes or other mucus membranes can be affected.

Erythema multiforme is thought to be a hypersensitivity reaction, a specific type of allergic reaction. The most common cause is cold sores but other infections and medications can also be the cause. I will try to determine the cause based on the information you supply in the history. It is important to try to remember anything that is new or different that may be related.

In treating this condition, the first goal is to eliminate any possible cause. If an infection is the cause, many times the infection has passed and no intervention is required. If there is a concern the infection is still present, a medication may be prescribed. If there is a suspicion that a medication may be the cause, the medication should be stopped immediately.

In many cases it is not possible to find a specific cause. These types of erythema multiforme seem to be one time eruptions which often are caused by a combination of circumstances. In these situations it is quite unusual for there to be a recurrence of these circumstances so it usually a single event and unlikely to recur.

In general, the treatment is designed at relieving the symptoms such as itching. This may be treated with various topical medications, oral medications, or an injection. The treatment will be based on your symptoms and the type of eruption.

Normally, erythema multiforme will subside relatively quickly. I would suggest that you try to taper off the oral or topical medication as the condition improves. That is, use the products less frequently as your condition improves. If you have any other questions regarding this condition, please ask me before you leave the office.

