

# Persistent Insect Bite Reaction

## (papular urticaria)

### What is it?

Papular urticaria is an increased sensitivity (almost like an allergic reaction) to insect bites; including mosquitoes, fleas, midges, mites and bed bugs. It causes itchy red bumps, sometimes with blistering, on the skin that can last for days to months. As they heal, they can leave dark spots on the skin that fade slowly over many months. Scratching of the itchy bumps can sometimes lead to infection and can also cause scars.

The bumps usually appear where the insect bite(s) occurred, but they can also appear all over the body. Papular urticaria is more common in spring and summer when insects are more active. Often only one person in the family gets this type of reaction. Papular urticaria is most common in small children and most children will grow out of it. It may also occur in adults, especially in travelers to new environments.



### How can we treat it?

- ✓ A steroid cream can be put on the red itchy bumps as soon as you notice them. It will help with itching and helps the bumps go away faster. Apply this twice each day until the skin feels smooth and the itch has settled:

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- ✓ A non-drowsy anti-histamine liquid or tablet can help settle the allergic reaction:

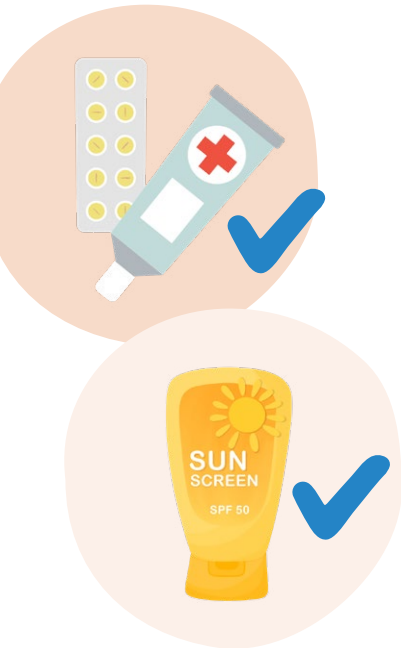
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- ✓ Keep the nails trimmed short and try to avoid scratching to prevent infection and scars. If an infection is present, sometimes an antibiotic is needed:

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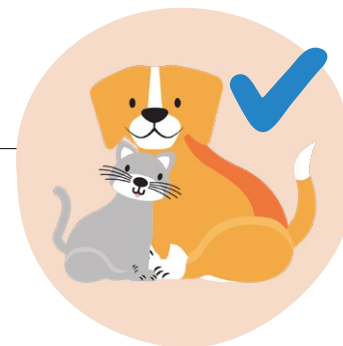
- ✓ Flat dark spots from old bumps will slowly fade, but using sun-protection (shade, clothing, hat, sunscreen) will help them go away faster:

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### How can we prevent it?

- ✓ Wear protective clothing if you are going outdoors; including long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks with closed-toed shoes.
- ✓ Use an insect repellent on uncovered skin before going outside.
- ✓ Check your home, bedding and pets for insects. Call an exterminator if you find any biting insects in your home.
- ✓ Take your pets to the vet if they have fleas.



### Want more information?

[dermnetnz.org](http://dermnetnz.org)  
[dermcoll.edu.au/a-to-z-of-skin](http://dermcoll.edu.au/a-to-z-of-skin)

This factsheet was developed as part of the Koolungar Moorditj Healthy Skin Project.