Dear Alice,

Can you tell me the best way to treat jock itch? The infected area is somewhere below and on the sides of the scrotum and the middle portion of the penis. Is it recommended to use hydrogen peroxide to clean the infected area prior to using anti-fungal creams? Thanks.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Tineus cruris, also known as jock itch, is one of several maladies that may produce irritation and discomfort in the groin. It’s caused from a fungus that can be spread between people through towels and clothing and is often found in damp spaces such as locker rooms. The fungus is also responsible for the other common scourges of gym-goers and athletes, such as ringworm and athlete’s foot, which sometimes appear concurrently with jock itch. Jock itch generally responds to at-home treatment within a few weeks, but if it doesn’t, additional treatment can be sought from a medical professional (more on this in a bit!). While hydrogen peroxide may be noted as a common home remedy for jock itch, health care providers don’t generally recommend this as a form of treatment. To learn more about jock itch, keep on reading!

Jock itch can certainly cause an itch that makes you want to scratch. Itching of the groin, anal area, and area of the inner thigh adjacent to the groin is a common symptom of jock itch. Additionally, it typically results in a characteristic symptom — a raised rash that tends to be clear in the center. The elevated, well-demarcated, and ring-like nature of this rash helps differentiate jock itch from other skin problems. The rash may become dry and scaly at times or, less commonly, develop into oozing and crusting blisters.

Jock itch can often be treated through self-care and over-the-counter measures:

- Wash and thoroughly dry the affected area, especially after physical activity. Clean the area using mild soap and warm water. Use drying powders if excessive perspiration is a concern.
- Avoid chafing by wearing loose fitting underwear.
- Apply over-the-counter anti-fungal creams or powders recommended for jock itch. Follow the regimen outlined in the accompanying instructions. Be careful not to over-treat the area,
as this can lead to further irritation.

- Change clothing and underwear every day.

Even if the rash and itching subside, it's best to continue treatment for the duration recommended in the medication directions. This will ensure that all of the fungus is killed off and prevent a reoccurrence. If these treatments don’t work after a couple of weeks, a health care provider may prescribe additional treatments as necessary. Keep in mind that itching and rashes in the groin area and especially on the genitals may be the result of a condition other than jock itch requiring medical attention, such as a yeast infection or sexually transmitted infection (STI). It can be helpful to seek a medical assessment because treatments will vary depending on the cause of the itching.

Once jock itch improves, you can help prevent its return. Some prevention tips include:

- Wash your workout clothes after each use. Avoid storing damp clothes or towels in enclosed spaces, such as a locker or duffel bag.
- Change your underwear daily. You may want to do so even more often if you take part in activities that make you sweat.
- If you're particularly susceptible to jock itch, use drying powders after bathing.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing, at least from the waist down.

Here's to hoping you find some relief soon!

Alice!

Related questions

- Dry skin? [5]
- Ringworm [6]
- Peeling skin after using a tanning bed [7]

Resources

- Medical Services (Morningside) [8]
- Medical Services (CUIMC) [9]

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