# Rash: Care Instructions

## Your Care Instructions

A rash is any irritation or inflammation of the skin. Rashes have many possible causes, including allergy, infection, illness, heat, and emotional stress.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor or nurse advice line (**811** in most provinces and territories) if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

- Wash the area with water only. Soap can make dryness and itching worse. Pat dry.
- Put cold, wet cloths on the rash to reduce itching.
- Keep cool, and stay out of the sun.
- Leave the rash open to the air as much of the time as possible.
- Sometimes petroleum jelly (Vaseline) can help relieve the discomfort caused by a rash. A moisturizing lotion, such as Cetaphil, also may help. Calamine lotion may help for rashes caused by contact with something (such as a plant or soap) that irritated the skin. Use it 3 or 4 times a day.
- If your doctor prescribed a cream, use it as directed. If your doctor prescribed medicine, take it exactly as directed.
- If itching affects your sleep, ask your doctor if you can take an antihistamine that might reduce itching and make you sleepy, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl). Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.

## When should you call for help?

**Call your doctor or nurse advice line now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
  - Red streaks leading from the area.
  - Pus draining from the area.
  - A fever.
- You have joint pain along with the rash.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor or nurse advice line if:

- Your rash is changing or getting worse. For example, call if you have pain along with the rash, the rash is spreading, or you have new blisters.
- You do not get better after 1 week.