

PITYRIASIS ALBA

Pityriasis alba is a common skin condition that predominantly affects children. It commonly occurs as patchy areas of light-colored skin on the cheeks, arms, and trunk. Although the clinical appearance of pityriasis alba is very telling additional tests may be required to secure the diagnosis.

Pityriasis alba is caused by a very mild inflammation of the skin that causes cells that normally produce color (melanocytes) to decrease their activity. When melanocytes are less active, less color is produced, resulting in the lighter areas of skin. These lighter patches of skin are more noticeable in summer when children are more prone to acquiring suntans producing a greater difference in skin color. Nevertheless, pityriasis alba can occur at any time. The areas can last anywhere from several weeks to several months. Pityriasis alba is not harmful.

Dr. Crutchfield likes to treat pityriasis alba with a mild topical moisturizing and an anti-inflammatory lotion. This lotion is prescription strength and Dr. Crutchfield will provide you with a prescription at your office visit if the condition is significant to warrant this type of treatment. Dry skin does not cause pityriasis alba, but it certainly can make it worse. To this end, good moisturizers and mild cleansing products are recommended. Dr. Crutchfield will also review specific recommendations with you concerning these products.

Rest assured this is a very common condition affecting children. One survey demonstrated that it affected 60% of children of color. Once again, the condition is not harmful and treatments generally will make the skin return to normal over a few weeks. Please follow the directions for the prescriptions and recommendations for moisturizers and cleansers provided by Dr. Crutchfield.

For more helpful information concerning skin issues, please visit our website www.crutchfelddermatology.com. If the condition is worsening or if you have other questions or concerns, please contact our office.