

ERYTHEMA NODOSUM

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Erythema nodosum is a type of inflammation of the fat tissue beneath the skin. It is a skin reaction that can be present from many different causes, as noted below. Your physician can diagnose this condition with a complete history and physical examination, although a skin biopsy may be needed in cases that do not present normally. Erythema nodosum occurs more often in women than men.

SYMPTOMS

Erythema nodosum usually presents as red, warm, tender and immovable bumps that arise on the shins. There is no break in the skin present. They are normally on both sides of the body. They can also appear in other areas such as the arms, elbows, knees, thighs, calves and buttocks. The bumps can range from a half-inch to several inches in diameter. Sometimes, fevers, joint pain, fatigue, or upper respiratory/flu-like symptoms will happen before the bumps occur. The bumps can develop over several days and may be seen with redness or swelling at the involved sites. The redness often changes to a more bruise-like color such as purple, brown, or yellow as the bumps age.

CAUSES:

- Infections, such as *Strep* (most common) or tuberculosis
- Certain medications, such as birth control pills and sulfa drugs
- Inflammatory conditions, such as inflammatory bowel disease or sarcoidosis
- Blood cancers, such as lymphoma or leukemia
- It is possible for no cause to be found during or after a case of erythema nodosum
- Pregnancy

MEDICAL CARE & TREATMENT:

If you are concerned that you may have erythema nodosum, please call your osteopathic family physician. Given that erythema nodosum is often the present from an underlying cause, it is important for that cause to be identified and evaluated. Treatments will vary depending on the underlying cause. The bumps usually will go away over the course of several weeks without any treatment. Medicines like ibuprofen along with bed rest and leg elevation may be helpful for symptoms. Your skin may stay bruised or discolored for weeks to months, but there is usually no scarring.

SOURCE(S): *Up to Date - Erythema Nodosum, American Osteopathic College of Dermatology - Erythema Nodosum, Medscape- Erythema Nodosum*

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