

Home remedies: Don't scratch swimmer's itch

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Swimmer's itch is an itchy rash that can occur after you go swimming or wading outdoors. Also known as cercarial dermatitis, swimmer's itch is most common in freshwater lakes and ponds, but it occasionally occurs in salt water.

Swimmer's [itch](#) is a rash usually caused by an allergic reaction to [parasites](#) that burrow into your skin while you're swimming or wading in warm [water](#).

The parasites that cause swimmer's itch normally live in waterfowl and some animals. These parasites can be released into the water. Humans aren't suitable hosts, so the parasites soon die while still in your skin.

Swimmer's itch is uncomfortable, but it usually clears up on its own in a few days. In the meantime, you can control itching with over-the-counter or prescription medications.

LIFESTYLE AND HOME REMEDIES

These tips might help reduce the itch:

- Apply a cream or medication.
- Don't scratch.

- Cover affected areas with a clean, wet washcloth.
- Soak in a bath sprinkled with Epsom salts, baking soda or oatmeal.
- Make a paste of baking soda and water, and then apply it to the affected areas.

PREVENTION

The parasites that cause swimmer's itch live in the blood of waterfowl and in animals that live near ponds and lakes. To reduce the risk of swimmer's itch:

- Choose swimming spots carefully. Avoid swimming in areas where swimmer's itch is a known problem or signs warn of possible contamination. Also avoid swimming or wading in marshy areas where snails are commonly found.
- Avoid the shoreline, if possible. If you're a strong swimmer, head to deeper water for your swim. You may be more likely to develop swimmer's itch if you spend a lot of time in warmer water near the shore.
- Rinse after swimming. Rinse exposed skin with clean water immediately after leaving the water, then vigorously dry your skin with a towel. Launder your swimsuits often.
- Skip the bread crumbs. Don't feed birds on docks or near swimming areas.
- Apply waterproof sunscreen. This has been reported to protect the skin from the parasite that causes [swimmer's](#) itch.

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