

## What is it?

Pruritus is the medical word for itchy skin. There are many reasons why your skin can itch. You may have a rash or other skin condition. Itchy skin can also happen with other conditions such as liver problems or during dialysis. Pruritus may occur in one spot or all over. It can be short-term or last a long time (known as chronic). Scratching itchy skin can cause skin damage.

## What will my GP do now?

Where possible, your GP may try to discover and treat the underlying cause of your itchy skin. Your GP may also:

- Advise you to use a cream or ointment if you have dry skin
- Order a blood test or do a skin biopsy
- Refer you to a skin specialist (dermatologist)

Your GP may also give you general advice about how to take care of your skin (see 'What can I do?').

## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will want to see you again to see how your treatment is going. If the itching hasn't improved, your GP may prescribe you a medicine such as an antihistamine or steroid. If you haven't seen a specialist, your GP may suggest a referral.

## What can I do?

Avoid scratching the itchy area. Scratching can damage your skin. Keep your nails short to prevent breaking the skin if you do scratch. Have a cool bath or shower. Be careful, however, as excessive showering or bathing may make it worse. Gently pat yourself dry with a clean towel after bathing. Do not rub or use the towel to scratch yourself. Avoid using any soaps, shower gels or foam bath products. They can dry the skin and make the itching worse. Wear loose cotton clothing when possible. This can help prevent you overheating and making the itch worse.



## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Do I need to take any medication?
- How can I best look after my skin?
- What if my itchy skin doesn't improve?
- What triggers should I avoid?



## What supports are available?

### Liverpool Hospital Dermatology Department

The Liverpool Hospital Dermatology Department provides a broad range of skin services with specialist dermatologists. With staff specialising in common and rare skin diseases, the team offer treatment for all ages, from newborns to the elderly and pregnant women. Ask your GP for a referral.

### Private clinics

Private specialist clinics are available in the South Western Sydney Health District. Ask your GP for a referral.

## Where can I learn more?

- **Health Direct** – itchy skin: [healthdirect.gov.au](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au)