7 Ways to Soothe a Fibromyalgia Rash

by STARLA RICH

Dealing With a Fibromyalgia Rash

Each day is a new day for those suffering from fibromyalgia. The many symptoms and conditions make it all the more important to gain as much information as possible on ways to manage this disease.

Besides the well-known symptoms of fatigue, weakness, widespread muscle pain and *allodynia* (an extreme pain response to pressure), some people find that they also develop skin rashes and other skin disorders and changes associated with fibromyalgia.

These rashes can be distressing, making people feel uncomfortable and conspicuous or unattractive, and can add to the feelings of depression and isolation.

Causes of Skin Rashes With Fibromyalgia

People with fibromyalgia syndrome are more likely to have sensitive skin than the rest of the population, and between 50 to 80 percent of people with fibromyalgia syndrome will develop skin rashes or other skin problems. These can affect already disturbed sleep, and add to the allodynia, making it even more challenging to find clothes that are comfortable.

If you are one of those people who find yourself changing clothes multiple times before deciding on an outfit, then you understand the struggle. It has nothing to do with vanity.

Some rashes could be a reaction to medications – always consult a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

There are several other possible causes of skin rashes with fibromyalgia:

- **Immunological Disruption.** Skin rashes may occur due to an immune disruption just beneath the surface of the skin. Dr. Xavier Caro conducted research that pointed to a group of highly concentrated proteins that exist under the skin of fibromyalgia patients. He believed that the body would interpret these proteins as foreign invaders, causing the immune system to respond and attack the proteins. This can cause the appearance of a rash below the skin.
- **Capillary Distortion.** Dr. Haiko Sprott, a Swedish researcher, found that capillaries just beneath the skin of fibromyalgia patients were less numerous and also a bit distorted in shape, according to the Fibromyalgia Network. Because of this, the blood flow to the skin and other similar tissues is reduced, which could cause sensitivity or rash on the skin of a fibromyalgia patient.
- **Neurological Reactions.** A group of researchers discovered that patients with fibromyalgia had enormously increased numbers of mast cells, cells that contain chemicals such as histamines and cytokines. These chemicals, if released from the cells due to a neurological response in the body, can cause irritation and pain in surrounding tissue. This condition, however, may not show up as a rash but rather as a hot spot or burning sensation just below the skin.

- **The brain and nervous system.** Another cause of fibromyalgia rashes may have to do with the central nervous system. The brain is unable to read pain cues correctly and, therefore, a skin rash or tenderness may occur just because of a misreading by the brain. This may also cause itchiness and redness due to scratching. A rash may also appear due to an overactive pituitary gland sending too much melanin through the body.

Skin Conditions with Fibromyalgia

Rashes associated with fibromyalgia are usually red and may be raised and bumpy. They can also be sore or itchy. With fibromyalgia, while the brain often misinterprets pressure signals as pain, it may also become further confused and wrongly interpret touch or pressure, triggering this itching sensation. Other skin sensations include numbness, tingling, a crawling sensation, or a feeling of burning.

People with fibromyalgia tend to develop dry skin, which can worsen the itching. This can occur anywhere on the body but may be most severe in the hands and fingers.

Those suffering from fibromyalgia may find that they bruise or scar more easily and that bruises take longer to heal. Skin color can change, becoming darker – this may be related to over-production of melatonin.

Another reason for skin rashes in those with fibromyalgia may be due to sensitivity to light (photosensitive), and this can cause skin reddening, soreness, and rashes.

7 Tips to Help Manage a Fibromyalgia Rash

No matter the underlying cause of skin rashes, there are things that you can do to improve the condition. The basic, of course, is to promote better sleep and stress-reducing techniques. When these two areas are improved, every symptom of fibromyalgia improves.

Below are topical applications that may help:

1. **Use a hypoallergenic moisturizer.** A gentle cream designed for rashes such as *Sudocrem*, or an over-the-counter corticosteroid cream, may help.
2. **Use cold packs.** For itching, putting cold packs or cold compresses on the areas that are itching may help.
3. **For dry skin, avoid harsh soaps and shower gels and keep skin well moisturized, especially after baths and showers.** This will also reduce any itching. Avoid anything with too many artificial fragrances – cocoa butter or shea butter, or hypoallergenic baby products may help.
4. **Drink enough water.** Your whole body, including your skin, has to be well hydrated to stay healthy. Rather than counting a certain number of glasses of water you should drink daily, consider the urine test: if your urine is white or very light yellow, it means you are well hydrated. If it is dark yellow, it means you're not drinking enough and need to boost your water intake.
5. **Apply cream on your skin every day.** You may need to apply extra creams on your dry areas (hands and fingers). Choose natural creams, free of artificial colors or fragrances (which can also irritate the skin).
6. **Use sunscreen.** When you spend time outdoors, wear a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.
7. **Eat healthy.** Your skin will be as healthy as your whole body is. Avoid fast foods, and eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean meats and fish, nuts, seeds and healthy grains.

The Bottom Line...

Whatever treatment you consider, make sure you consult your doctor to rule out other possible conditions or illnesses. Mostly, seek treatment as soon as symptoms occur.

I developed a skin rash that covered my whole body before I had a chance to seek treatment. It was due to an allergic reaction to a blood pressure medicine rather than a symptom of FM.

It was so severe and painful that I had to take medicine to cause me to sleep so I would not hurt, scratch, or irritate the rash. It took over a month for this dreaded condition to heal. As with every other symptom and condition of fibromyalgia, don’t minimize! We tend to develop so many symptoms that we assume they are due to fibromyalgia.

It is important that you maintain good communication with your physician so that each symptom in your life is properly addressed and managed. Like every other condition associated with fibromyalgia, skin rashes can be treated, and quality of life improved with proper care.