



Dermatology Patient Education

Granuloma Annulare

Granuloma annulare is a harmless skin condition; however, it is most often confused with ringworm, a fungal skin infection. Therefore, it is important to see a dermatologist for the correct diagnosis.

What causes granuloma annulare is unknown. Dermatologists and researchers believe the immune system may play a role. In some cases, there may be a link between granuloma annulare and diabetes, the functioning of your thyroid, or other diseases.

For some people, a skin injury, insect bite, infection, or sun exposure seems to “trigger” (begin) the condition.



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WHAT DOES GRANULOMA ANNULARE LOOK LIKE?

You may notice a round, firm, smooth-feeling bump. This bump will become ring-shaped, leaving a center of clear skin, which resembles the shape of a doughnut. The affected skin can be pink, purple, or appear a bit darker than your skin color.

Since this spot usually does not peel or itch, many people never notice it. This is called “localized” granuloma annulare.

You can also develop a widespread rash of flesh-colored or purplish bumps. These tiny bumps can appear in many places on the skin. The granuloma annulare can spread, covering more skin before it starts to clear. This type is called “generalized” granuloma annulare.

WHERE DOES GRANULOMA ANNULARE APPEAR?

Granuloma annulare can form anywhere on the skin. However, if you have a single spot, it most likely is on the top of your hand or foot, or on your elbow or knee.

WHO GETS IT?

People of all ages can develop localized granuloma annulare, though it is more common in females and those under 30 years of age.

It is more common for older adults to develop generalized granuloma annulare.



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HOW DOES A DERMATOLOGIST DIAGNOSE GRANULOMA ANNULARE?

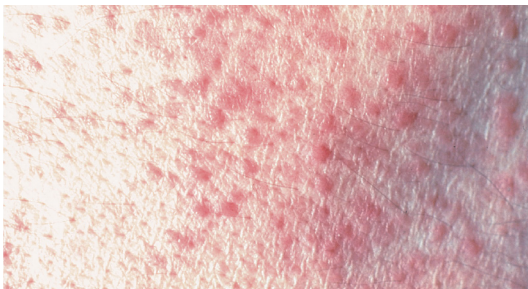
Your dermatologist usually diagnoses granuloma annulare by examining your skin.

To ensure a proper diagnosis, your dermatologist may scrape off a bit of the affected skin or perform a biopsy (cut out a small amount of the skin). The removed skin will be examined under a microscope.

A dermatologist will perform a skin scraping or biopsy to see if you have the following conditions, instead of granuloma annulare:

- **Ringworm:** A fungal skin infection that requires treatment.
- **Lyme disease:** An infectious disease caused by a bite from a deer tick. Lyme disease can cause serious health problems without treatment. The first rash that a person who has Lyme disease usually gets causes a circular pattern on the skin that gets larger with time.
- **Insect bites:** Depending on the insect, some bites need treatment.
- **Sarcoidosis:** An inflammatory disease that affects multiple organs in the body, but mostly the lungs and lymph glands.

Sometimes, a blood test is necessary to rule out other possible diseases.



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IS TREATMENT NECESSARY?

Treatment is usually not necessary since most people do not have symptoms.

This skin condition often goes away on its own with time. Most people see their skin clear in a few months. In some cases, clearing takes longer. Some people have granuloma annulare for years. A granuloma annulare rash can clear and return later in life.

If you have generalized granuloma annulare and dislike the way your skin looks, treatment is available. Your dermatologist will prescribe a treatment tailored to your needs, such as:

- **Corticosteroid cream or ointment:** Applied at home, this prescription medicine helps to clear spots and bumps. It is important to use this medicine as directed as it may cause unwanted side effects such as thinning skin.
- **Corticosteroid injection:** Your dermatologist will inject this directly into the spot to help clear it.

- **Cryotherapy:** This in-office treatment freezes the skin, which causes the treated skin to die and flake off. Stubborn spots and bumps can be removed with this treatment.
- **PUVA light therapy:** This is a controlled dose light therapy that uses UVA light and a medicine called psoralen. Your dermatologist may prescribe this to treat a widespread rash.



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Your dermatologist may also prescribe other treatments to help clear stubborn granuloma annulare.

A board-certified dermatologist is a medical doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating the medical, surgical and cosmetic conditions of the skin, hair and nails. To learn more, visit aad.org or call toll free (888) 462-DERM (3376) to find a board-certified dermatologist in your area.

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P.O. Box 4014, Schaumburg, Illinois 60168-4014

AAD Public Information Center: 888.462.DERM (3376)

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Web: aad.org

Email: mrc@aad.org