

Erythema Nodosum & You

What is it?



Erythema nodosum is a very rare inflammatory condition that affects the fatty tissue located just underneath the skin.

It causes painful nodules on the skin that are usually red or violet-coloured and may be bumpy. Erythema nodosum most commonly occurs on the front of the legs but it can also appear on the thighs, trunk and arms.

Sometimes the cause of Erythema nodosum is not known. In other cases, it may occur in specific circumstances:

- **After infection with streptococcus (“Strep throat”)**
- **After other infections such as tuberculosis or fungal infections**
- **With other inflammatory conditions such as sarcoidosis, inflammatory bowel disease or Behçet’s disease**
- **After taking some medications such as oral contraceptive pills**
- **During pregnancy**



Erythema nodosum usually goes away with time

Erythema nodosum is typically a self-limited disorder. That means it will usually go away on its own after 2 to 8 weeks. Although the nodules on the skin may turn darker in colour and look like bruises, they typically go away completely without leaving any scars. So if you have Erythema nodosum, try to be patient and give it time – it will usually heal without leaving a trace. Luckily, there are effective treatments that can help relieve the pain.

What is it going to do to me?



Painful, red nodules on the shins are the most frequent symptom of Erythema nodosum.

The nodules arise from deep within the fatty tissue below the surface of the skin. They can cause the surface of the skin to change in colour and texture. Sometimes the nodules can be felt on the skin as bumps or lumps. Over time, the nodules can evolve into bruises. But they eventually go away completely after a few weeks or months.

Sometimes painful nodules are the only symptom. But when Erythema nodosum is associated with an infection, other symptoms such as fever, fatigue, and general malaise may occur.

People with Erythema nodosum may also develop aching joints. One or many joints can be affected, and they can sometimes be swollen.

Visit RheumInfo.com



RheumInfo.com is a free educational website where you can learn more about Erythema nodosum and treatments for the condition. The website is operated by Dr. Andy Thompson, a rheumatologist.

What can I do about it?



Erythema nodosum is usually a self-limited disorder. That means it goes away on its own over time. It can take 2 to 8 weeks for the nodules to go away. If Erythema nodosum is associated with an infection or another inflammatory disorder, it usually gets better when the other condition is treated or is under control. In that case, you may not need any other treatment for Erythema nodosum.

But if the painful nodules persist despite treatment of associated conditions, or if there is no known cause for your Erythema nodosum, then specific medications may be needed.

Analgesic medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) can help relieve pain. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or NSAIDs are very effective at reducing inflammation and can help relieve achy joints. When these medications are not enough to control symptoms, then prednisone may help.

Here are some other recommendations on what you should do:

- **Learn as much as you can about the condition**
- **Ensure associated conditions are treated and controlled**
- **If you are a smoker, it is important to quit**
- **Learn about the medications used to treat the pain of Erythema nodosum**